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a joint family speaking Koḍagi while another speaks Kannaḍa. Until recently Coorgs living south of Mercara had a prejudice against marrying those living in the north. The latter were regarded as inferior and derisively referred to as those living 'beyond the hills' (*boṭṭat mēlé*), the implication being that Coorgs south of Mercara were the best Coorgs.

Coorgs formed a compact unit in relation to other castes. They possessed wealth and power, they liked dancing, competitive games involving the exercise of skill and strength, hunting, and soldiering. In the Vēdic or classical caste system these virtues are attributed to Kshatriyas, the caste of warriors and kings, who are next only to the Brahmin in the hierarchy. The resemblances between Coorgs and the Vēdic Kshatriyas are striking indeed in the matter of values, and it is understandable that Coorgs should regard themselves as Kshatriyas. But the classical Kshatriyas, as one of the three 'twice-born' castes, were entitled to perform certain rituals at which sacred verses (*mantras*) from the Vēdas were recited by the priests. Coorgs do not perform any of these rituals and Vēdic *mantras* are not recited when a Coorg is given a name, or marries, or dies.

Coorgs, like other Caste Hindus, object very strongly to the eating of beef, and the strength of their objection was early recognized by the British who banned all slaughter of cattle for the table in Coorg in 1835. But the Coorg dietary includes pork and liquor, and this is occasionally singled out for comment by the other castes. The correlation between status and dietary is particularly strong in the interior of south India, and the Coorg claim to be considered as Kshatriyas comes up against this fact. Coorgs rightly point out that the Rajputs of north India eat pork and that this has not prevented them from being generally regarded as Kshatriyas. However, Rajputs eat only the wild pig and not the domesticated one.

In the Sanskritic myth (*Kāvēri Purāṇa* or *Kāvēri Māhātmya*) about the River Kāvēri, Coorgs are said to be Ugras,[1] or the descendants of the marriage of a Kshatriya prince and his Shūdra wife. The Kāvēri Myth thus cleverly reconciles the economic and

[1] Ugra means 'strong, formidable, terrible, violent, angry, passionate, cruel, fierce, pungent, hot, high and noble. It is also the name of a mixed tribe, descended from a Kshatriya father and Shudra mother, and of Malabar.' M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p. 172.

prevails between the higher castes and Poleyas. For instance, Poleyas may not come out of their huts during the first eighteen days of the biennial festival of the deity Kētrappa at Bēngūr. It is believed that they will suffer some misfortune if they come out and see the festival-priests (*kāvukāras*) going about their sacred work.

Quite the opposite attitude prevails towards Poleyas at the festival of the Bhadrakāḷi of Kunda. The Poleya oracles have many duties at the festival, though they are not permitted to enter the temple of Bhadrakāḷi. They may not touch a high caste person, but they have the right of barring anyone from entering the temple. They stopped me presumably because they considered my dress—I was wearing a suit—improper, and they let me in only after a Coorg friend had explained who I was.

Ritual occasions might either emphasize the structural cleavages that normally exist between high and low castes, or they might tend to minimize them. The former leads, among other things, to the exclusion of the lower castes from ritual, while the latter leads to their inclusion. But inclusion does not mean that structural distance is abolished totally for the duration of the ritual occasion. What happens may be more accurately described by stating that certain individuals belonging to the low castes have ritual roles which place them temporarily in a superior position *vis-à-vis* the high castes.

At an ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, a Baṇṇa acts as oracle: he is possessed by each of the ancestor-spirits in turn, and while the possession lasts, he is identified with the particular ancestor possessing him. As the temporary vehicle of the spirit of an ancestor he is entitled to say and do things which he normally would not dream of saying and doing. As ancestor, he might censure the head of the joint family for not attending to his duties properly.

Nowadays young Coorgs who are sceptical about their traditional beliefs tend to see the Baṇṇa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation as an actor playing several roles in a play, and not as the vehicle of the spirits of their ancestors. A young Coorg told me that he had seen a Baṇṇa oracle saluting a big official while he was alleged to be possessed by an ancestor-spirit, and this was proof to him of the fact that all possessions were just make-believe and not real.

Another Coorg youth told me that while he was witnessing an ancestor-propitiation at a friend's house, the Baṇṇa oracle, address-

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emphasized the solidarity of the village and offset the separating influence of caste.

The solidarity prevalent between the various castes in a village (or *nāḍ*) finds ritual expression during *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs. On this occasion, the representatives of the priestly, artisan, and servant castes living in the village (or *nāḍ*) visit the house of every Coorg in their area, and either give a gift or perform a service characteristic of their caste. They are given in return gifts of provisions like rice, rice-flour, pepper, salt, jaggery, coconut oil, coconuts, and a giant yam (*putri geṇasu*) which is harvested during *putri*.

The local Brahmin priest visits, in turn, each Coorg house in his village (or *nāḍ*). He purifies the house by sprinkling it with a little consecrated water which he carries in a ritually pure vessel. He also gives each member of the house a tiny spoonful of consecrated water to drink. The priest is sent away with a gift of provisions.

Like the priest, the Kaṇiya astrologer visits the various Coorg houses in his village (or *nāḍ*). He informs the head of each house when the rites of *néré kaṭṭuvudu* (see pp. 230–1) and cutting the paddy sheaves should be performed. These rites are performed only during auspicious periods.

The members of the artisan castes follow the Kaṇiya. The Tachchāyiri or carpenter brings with him a gift of a new wooden ladle with which to stir the festival curry made with all the vegetables grown at this time of the year. He also brings a bamboo receptacle (*kutti*) in which the severed paddy sheaves are brought home. The Kolla or blacksmith brings a new sickle with which the sheaves are cut. The Mēda brings a new harvest basket (*putri pachchiya*) which is used in the festival. The Kumbāra or potter brings a new pot in which the harvest curry is cooked. Finally, the Poleya brings a new mat which is used in the festival.

The harvest festival is the biggest of the various calendar festivals of Coorgs, and on this occasion each of the several castes with whom Coorgs live in close and intimate contact does some service, or brings some gift, characteristic of it. Gifts are given in return to each of them. The exchange of gifts strengthens the bonds prevalent between Coorgs and other castes.

At the harvest festival each of several interdependent castes living in a village performs some essential service which cannot be performed by another, and this fact is brought home to the

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villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.[1]

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* way (see pp. 129–30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the *okka* in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nāḍ*-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

[1] Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

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instance of Kaiyandira Appayya who saved the honour of his *nāḍ* and its temple by defeating and killing the fighter Kullachenda Chondu. A grateful *nāḍ* decreed that none, not even elders to Appayya, may address him by name. He was not permitted to salute an elder by touching the latter's feet. He was also prohibited from doing a number of things which ordinary Coorgs did, as, for instance, wearing the black Coorg gown (only the white gown is sacred), ploughing, and eating bamboo-shoots.

At the harvest festival the astrologer may choose a young boy to perform the rite of cutting the sheaves. Such a boy is put into a position of ritual respect till the festival is over. He wears a white gown and he may not be touched till he has brought the severed sheaves home. Further, he is not permitted to salute an elder till the ritual is over. In other words the accordance of extreme respect to him necessitates the endowment of seniority for the duration of the ritual.

VIII

The Coorg *okka* seems to be stronger and more sharply structured than the joint family elsewhere in south India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal *tarwāḍ* of the Nāyars, and the patrilineal *illam* of the Nambūdris. Every *okka* has an ancestral house (*ain mané*) built on the ancestral estate. Formerly, most of the members of the *okka* lived in the ancestral house, but nowadays only one or two segments inhabit it, while the rest are scattered all over Coorg and, occasionally, all over India. All the members of the *okka* gather together only on certain occasions, such as the marriage or death of a member, the harvest festival, the festival of the local village-deity, and the periodical ancestor-propitiation.

The ancestral house and estate are accorded respect, and it is usual to have ancestor-shrines (*kaimaḍa*) or ancestor-platforms (*kāraṇava taré*) near the ancestral house. Coorgs, even those who are living away from the ancestral house, have some attachment towards it, and this expresses itself in having marriages and ancestor-propitiations performed there in preference to anywhere else. Also, a Coorg prefers to be buried after death in his ancestral burial-ground which is a corner of the ancestral estate used for disposal of the dead members of the *okka*.

The ancestral house is usually a substantial building of stone and

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is a taboo on cooking being done in the mourning house till the corpse is removed.

On certain occasions the entire village co-operates, though the lower castes co-operate at a different level from others. An example will make clear what we mean. Every caste in the village co-operates during the harvest festival of Coorgs. It is the harvest festival of *Coorgs* alone, and not, for instance, of the Mēdas or Poleyas. The Mēdas beat the tom-tom and Poleyas play on their pipes to the dancing of Coorgs. Every Coorg *okka* has to send all the adult men in it to the village dance and hunt. Poleyas and Mēdas act as beaters at this hunt while the other castes do the shooting. Later, there is a dinner for the entire village, called, appropriately enough, *ūrormé*, i.e. 'village harmony', where the game killed in the hunt is cooked. Every male member of the village participates in this dinner, Coorgs and equivalent castes sitting together, while Mēdas and Poleyas form separate groups. The meat is cooked by Coorgs and equivalent castes, while every house brings its own supply of *puṭṭ*, or cooked rice-flour, which is eaten with the curry. The Brahmin does not participate in the village dinner as it is cooked by castes lower to him in the hierarchy. Besides, he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. It may be noted that the Brahmin is almost as frequently excluded from village activities as the Untouchable. The Brahmin does not hunt or dance, nor does he favour the propitiation of deities with animal sacrifice and liquor.

Every member of the village is required to observe certain rules during the harvest festival. He has to keep the door of his house open and the sacred domestic lamps lit. He must be hospitable to parties of singers and dancers and mix with other villagers. He must refrain from abusing and fighting even if there is provocation from the other party.

Though parties of Coorg singers did not visit the houses of Mēdas and Poleyas, even the latter were required to observe the rules. Every caste, including Mēdas and Poleyas, was present when inquiry into cases of breaches of rules took place.

A wedding in a Coorg house requires the co-operation of all the castes in the village, and the fee payable to them is fixed by custom. It is the same with the festival of the village-deity, though sometimes the Poleyas are almost entirely excluded from this festival. During the festival of Kētrappa at Bēngūr, the Poleyas may not be

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During the festival of Kētrappa at Bengōr the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or *nāḍ*), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival (*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity (*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure (*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than

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as symbols of its identity and individuality, if not superiority. The saw '*ār nāḍku nūr pājé*', which might be translated as 'six *nāḍs*, hundred customs', testifies to the great cultural diversity within Coorg.

A *nāḍ* might differ from other *nāḍs* in the matter of the date of observance of important festivals such as the harvest festival and festival of arms. It might also differ in the articles used in the festival ritual: for instance, the plants used in the harvest festival ritual vary in different *nāḍs*, and this is due to the fact that in each area the plants locally prolific are chosen to express a wish for growth.

The various villages of a *nāḍ* co-operate on certain occasions as the harvest festival and the periodical festival of the local village-deity. During the harvest festival, on the day after the village dance (*ūr kōlu*), a dance for the entire *nāḍ* (*nāḍ kōlu*) is held in which all the men of the *nāḍ* take part. Games testing the strength and skill of individuals are also held on this occasion, and this provides an opportunity for the canalization of inter-village rivalry, just as at a festival in a village the games played canalizes inter-*okka* rivalry.

When the bridegroom is marching in state to the bride's house it is customary for the villages in the groom's *nāḍ* to offer him the 'plantain honour' (*bāḷé birudu*): a row of three stout plaintain stems are fixed to the ground near the boundary (*mundalé*) of the village or *nāḍ*, and the groom is asked to cut the stems with his sword. The groom delegates someone to cut the stems on his behalf. The man offering the groom the 'plantain honour' should be wearing a Coorg gown, and he offers the party warm water to wash their hands and feet, mats to sit on, and betel leaves and areca-nut to chew. (Warm water, mat, and betel and nut are all symbols of hospitality and respect in Coorg as elsewhere in India.) If the party arrive at night the host provides them with torches for the road. The groom has to pay a money gift of two *paṇas* (about six annas) to the host in acknowledgement of the honour and hospitality done to him and his party.

A man has a great love for his *nāḍ*. This comes out repeatedly in Coorg folklore. An infant boy, called Chondu, was orphaned, and the *nāḍ* elders had to make arrangements for his care. When Chondu reached the years of discretion he wanted to show how deeply he appreciated what his *nāḍ* had done for him. He deter-

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is considered in this chapter while the non-*mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.'[1] (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.'[2] (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'[3]

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala*' as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

II

The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*. It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit *mūhurta*, which means a 'particular division of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.[4]

The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned, and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

[1] *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd edition), p. 235.
[2] Ibid., p. 2.
[3] *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.
[4] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 825.

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Four Coorgs beat the small Coorg drum called '*duḍi*' and sing some traditional songs at various points during *mangala*. These songs give an account of the ritual that is being performed. The singers also sing the 'road song' (*baṭṭé pāṭ*), while conducting the subject of *mangala* from one part of the house to another, and the road song gives a traditionally exaggerated account of everything that is found *en route*. At night, after dinner, Coorg singers sing songs about the groom, bride, their ancestors, and the guests who are present.

The elaborate preparations for *mangala* and the selection of an auspicious day for its performance stress the social importance of the occasion. *Mangala* indicates the movement of the subject from one position in the social structure to another, it marks a change in his social personality. *Mūrta* ritual is the most important part of *mangala*, and, consequently, it is performed during the most auspicious part of the auspicious day, and the subject undergoes a series of preparatory and purificatory rites before sitting down for *mūrta*.

The subject of *mangala*, if male, is ritually shaved by the barber, after which he is given a bath by three women relatives whose husbands are alive.[1] Women whose husbands are alive enjoy a higher ritual and social status than widows. Only an unmarried girl, and a woman whose first and only husband is alive, are entitled to take part in auspicious ritual. Not only widows, but also remarried widows, are excluded from auspicious ritual, but such exclusion is not as thorough among Coorgs as it is, for instance, among the Brahmins.

After a bath, the subject wears ritual garments, and proceeds to the sacred central hall (*nellakki naḍubāḍé*), where all ritual ought to take place, ideally speaking. In the central hall is the sacred tripod stool (*mukkāli* = three-legged) on which the subject sits, and on either side of the stool stands a bell-metal lamp (*kuttum boḷicha*). The subject thrice walks round the tripod stool and lamps, and then salutes the lamps and the tripod stool before sitting down on the latter. Circumambulation is clock-wise in auspicious ritual and anti-clockwise in mourning.

In front of the sitting subject is another such stool covered with a red silk cloth. An earthen lamp burns in a metal dining dish (*taḷi*)

[1] The subject sits on the floor fully clothed while the women relatives pour vesselfuls of hot water on him.

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796 which is kept on the stool before the subject. The lamp rests on a thin bed of rice spread inside the dish. A few betel leaves and areca-nuts are also kept alongside the lamp. The dish, rice, lamp, and betel leaves and nuts are all collectively referred to as '*taḷiyakki-boḷuk*' which literally means 'dish-rice-lamp'. It will be referred to as 'dish-lamp' in future, and a dish-lamp is considered essential on all ritual occasions.

[415] At *mangala*, in addition to the earthen lamp, a *kiṇḍi* full of milk is kept on the dish-lamp. A *kiṇḍi* is a bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side. At *mangala* every relative performs *vis-à-vis* the subject a series of solidarity rites collectively called *mūrta*, and one of these rites consists in giving the subject a little milk to drink. This is done by the relative holding the *kiṇḍi* in such a way that the tip of the spout touches the subject's mouth. The subject sucks in a few drops of milk through the spout.

Each of the assembled relatives singly performs *mūrta*, described below, towards the subject of *mangala*. Three married women, close relatives of the subject, are required to perform it before anyone else. If the subject's mother is alive and not a widow, she is entitled to be one of the three, and what is more, perform it first, even if the other two are her seniors.

The mother, or senior married woman, begins by sprinkling rice on the two bell-metal lamps on either side of the subject, and then salutes them. The sun-god is saluted next after throwing some rice backwards, over the shoulders. This is followed by the relative depositing a little rice successively at the joints of knees, elbows, and shoulders, and on the head of the subject. The relative then holds the spouted vessel before the subject and he sucks in a little milk through the spout. After this she presents the subject with a gold or silver coin. The subject salutes her by touching her feet with both his hands and carrying the latter back to his fore-
[788] head. This is done thrice. The married woman blesses him by touching his head and saying, 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'.

III

796 It has been mentioned before that *mangala* is an auspicious or
777 good-sacred ceremony and that it has to be performed on an auspicious day. All over India, among Hindus, it is believed that certain

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periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as inclusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspiciousness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *panchānga* which may be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Panchāngas* are nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a Coorg house to have a *panchānga*. It is frequently referred to as it gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur, and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes, and they are all mentioned in the *panchānga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to the whole of India.

IV

Mangala has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins, Okkaligas, and Gauḍas may enter all parts of the ancestral house. Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washermen (Maḍivāḷa), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, however, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

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796 778 occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house is purified after their departure.

783 [841] The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it from normal participation in social life.

841 Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālé poré* in which a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath. During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects in a condition of normal ritual status.

761 783 The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and the members of the particular household. After the corpse is removed, both the house and the members of the household have to be purified.

778 788 [823] Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp. The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This lamp is called *nellakki boḷuk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

[354] A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tūg boḷuk* or hanging lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbaṛé kōṇé*) and the kitchen (*umbaḷa mané*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food

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V

It is not only places which have ritual value, but also points of the compass. East is a sacred direction because the sun rises there, and Hindus in all parts of India regard the sun as a deity.

The ancestral house faces east and so does the ancestor-shrine. The lip of the sacred wall-lamp in the central hall faces east. The subject of a *mangala* ceremony sits facing east.

On getting up from his bed in the morning a Coorg salutes the wall-lamp and the sun. The cultivation of rice is accompanied by ritual at every stage, and on all these ritual occasions the subject of the rites begins by saluting the sun.

South is an inauspicious or bad-sacred direction. A corpse is buried or cremated with its head towards south. In Sanskritic Hinduism, south is the abode of Yama, the god of death.

Coorgs, like Hindus in other parts of India, regard east as a good-sacred direction and south as a bad-sacred direction. East is associated with Chūriya (sun-god), and south with Yama. Both these deities have an All-India spread. Coorgs worship these two deities along with other Hindus all over India. The possession of common values binds people together and Coorgs form a single community with Hindus all over India when they worship the same deities.

VI

Mūrta is the crucial part of *mangala*, and the rites performed prior to *mūrta* prepare the subject for it. The subject is shaved by the barber, given a bath by three married women, and dressed in ritual robes and ornaments before sitting down to *mūrta*. Shaving, the first of several preparatory rites, will be briefly considered here.

It is necessary to repeat here that shaving is done by barbers who form a caste. Contact with the barber defiles a member of a higher caste, and consequently shaving is invariably followed by a purificatory bath.

The subject of *mangala* wears a white cotton *kupya* while he is being shaved by the barber. The *kupya* is like a dressing-gown, and it is either black or white. The white gown is of cotton, has long sleeves, and covers the neck up to the throat. This is the traditional ritual dress of Coorgs. The black gown is a Westernized version of

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the white original: it is of wool, has short sleeves, and a V-shaped neck permitting the display of a collar and tie. The white gown is ritually superior to the black gown.

Usually the gown is secured at the waist by a tasselled red silk sash called *chēlé*, but when the subject is sitting for the shaving rite, a red cotton scarf is used instead of the silk sash.

The subject salutes the lamp in the south-western room, the south-western pillar, and the wall-lamp before sitting on the tripod stool placed on a mat. Near the mat is a dining-dish (*taḷi*) containing milk, and a harvest-basket containing some rice, a coconut, a bunch of plantains, and betel leaves and areca-nut.

Water may not be used for shaving on this occasion. Milk is used instead. The shavings are put into the dining-dish, and later the barber empties the dish at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

A distinctive form of shaving prevails at marriage, and perhaps at subsequent *mangalas* (it does not, however, prevail at the ear-boring *mangala*). The front of the head is shaved in such a manner that it leaves two 'horns' above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This mode of shaving is called '*kombanjavara*' which means 'horn shave'.

The harvest-basket containing rice, plantains, and the bell-metal dining-dish, and the scarf at the subject's waist, are given as gifts to the barber.

Two other men get themselves shaved after the subject. All over south India it is common at a wedding for two or four companions of the subject to 'accompany' him (or her) in certain rites. For instance, two men are given a bath along with the groom, and two girls are given a bath along with the bride.

In the south-western parts of Coorg the bride undergoes, before *mūrta*, a rite called '*kūrangodi muripa*', which is analogous to shaving. The bride's brother's wife removes from the bride's head a thin wisp of hair, and pares her nails. (The barber normally pares the nails after shaving a man.) These are put into a dining-dish containing milk. Later, the dining-dish is emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

Coorgs are generally more Westernized in their ways than others in Coorg, and there are more cropped heads among them than among others. But formerly they, like other Hindus, had their entire heads shaved but for a tuft of hair at the crown. Tufts started giving place to cropped heads towards the close of the last

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765 783 mourners attains partial freedom from mourning after he has offered rice mixed with *ghī*, curd, and plantain to the spirit of the departed person. The food is carried on a plantain leaf to the sacrificial post, where it is placed to be eaten by crows. As each of them comes into the house from the sacrificial post the family friend gives him (or her) a few betel leaves and areca-nut. The mourner chews the leaves and nut for a while, and then takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and throws it on the roof. The chewing of the leaves and nut on the eleventh day is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

On the *māda* day curried meat, rice, arrack, water, and betel leaves and areca-nut are offered to the dead person's spirit. A plantain leaf on which some curried meat and rice are heaped is placed at each of the three spots where the corpse was rested *en route* to the burial-ground. At the burial-ground itself the surviving spouse and two other mourners sprinkle water on the spot where the dead person was buried or cremated. Above the spot where the corpse's head rests are kept three leaves, each containing curried meat, and rice, and three leaf-cups (*challĕ*) containing arrack, water, and betel and nut respectively. Each of the mourners takes a betel leaf and nut from the leaf-cup in which they are kept, and chews them.

769 782 Food is offered to the dead ancestors of the *okka* at the periodical ancestor-propitiations. It is also offered to them as a body on the last days of Taurus and Cancer, and on the tenth of Libra. Besides, at every festival celebrated in the house, food is offered to the ancestors before the members of the household sit down to their meal.

The idea of offering food and drink to the dead person has a very important place in funeral ritual. The departed ancestors of the *okka* are remembered constantly, and food and drink are offered to them. They are also saluted and prayed to every day.

IX

796 783 A village is in a condition of ritual purity during the festival of the main deity of the village, a festival which usually lasts nine or eleven days, and sometimes even twenty-one days. No woman in her periods may stay in Bēngūr village during the festival of Kĕtrappa. She has to leave the village at once and may return only

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on the eighteenth day, in the evening, after the shot has been fired freeing the village from the restrictions in force during the festival. Similarly, no Poleya may leave his hut and show himself to a member of a high caste during the first eighteen days of the festival. They are specially forbidden to show themselves to the festival-priests (*kāvukāras*). The Poleyas are very greatly afraid of Kētrappa, whom they call 'big god' (*doḍḍa dēvaru*), and it is believed that Kētrappa will punish them if they show themselves to the villagers during the festival.

The festival of the village-deity usually includes a ceremony called *tappaḍaka* (enumeration of restrictions), in which all the adult villagers assemble together at the temple and take a vow to the effect that they will observe certain restrictions for the duration of the festival.

No villager may fire his gun during the festival, nor may he kill an animal for his food. He is not permitted to break an egg or coconut, or prepare liquor or season his curries. He may not spread a mat or carpet on the benches in the veranda or hall.

Sometimes the villagers are permitted to import meat from another village, the prohibition being only on the animal being killed within the village. Even where such concessions are made to the ordinary villagers, the festival-priests are strictly enjoined to keep off even imported meat.

The festival-priests have to refrain from sexual intercourse during the festival. They are also enjoined not to touch the ordinary high-caste villager who, it must be remembered, is himself in a condition of ritual purity. Such contact defiles them for the rest of the day, and only a bath in cold water early next morning restores them to their condition of great ritual purity. There are different levels of ritual purity, and each level is impurity with reference to a higher level.

The festival-priests are much more important for the festival than ordinary villagers. They dress and worship the idol. Usually one or more of them are oracles of one or other of the deities in the village temple. Their duties require their being frequently very near the idols and other representations of the deities they worship. Consequently, they have to be in a condition of great ritual purity. They have to observe more restrictions regarding food and other matters than ordinary villagers. The degree of

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ritual purity becomes, in this case, an index of the degree of concern in the festival. What is interesting to note is the widespread systematization of 'concern' in Coorg culture. The mother of the newly born infant has to observe pollution for a longer period than other relatives; and first-grade mourners have to observe mourning for a longer period than others. Not only the length of the period but also the number and character of the restrictions observed are used to mark off those with greater 'concern' in the event from those with less 'concern'. The greater the 'concern' the greater the bond.

The festival of a village-deity usually includes a ritual fast or *paṭṇi*: a day towards the end of the festival is called '*paṭṇi* day' and the villagers observe a ritual fast on this day. The fast day usually occurs before the festival (*nammé*) day. The festival day is regarded as the most important day of the festival, elaborate ritual being performed on this day, at the end of which animals are sacrificed. The various restrictions observed during the festival are broken on the festival day, usually towards evening. A big feast follows, which includes meat dishes and liquor, prohibited until now.

A ritual fast does not necessarily mean actual abstention from food. Frequently a ritual fast means only abstention from everyday food, and that too interpreted very narrowly. For instance, cooked rice grains and vegetable curry are the normal food among Coorgs, and this is prohibited at a ritual fast. But while cooked rice grains are prohibited, dishes made with rice-flour are not.

On the fast day Coorgs miss a meal, instead of which they consume pancakes made of rice-flour, and *pāyasa*, a sweet liquid dish made with split green gram. Pancakes and green gram *pāyasa* are very commonly eaten during ritual fasts in the Tamil country.

Coorgs are forbidden to eat pancakes and green gram *pāyasa* during weddings and while birth- and death-pollution last. As far as they are concerned this diet seems to be confined to the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. It is difficult to see the purpose of the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. While the observance of a ritual fast on the festival day till the rites are completed is understandable, a ritual fast on the day before the festival day is not easy to understand, especially if the villagers are permitted to eat the normal festival diet on the morning of the festival day. The fast day seems to exist quite

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unrelated to the rest of the structure of the festival of a village-deity.[1]

X

Some of the ritual acts performed and practices observed at mourning are obviously reversals or inversions of the acts and practices performed on good-sacred or auspicious occasions. For instance, the corpse is made to lie on a mat spread with the underside on top. It is true that like the subject of *mangala* the corpse is dressed in a white gown, but the latter is reversed in some way: it is worn with the underside uppermost, or with the left end of the gown coming on top of the right end. On auspicious occasions the proper side has to be on top, and the right end should rest on top of the left.

After the corpse has been laid in the grave, the surviving spouse throws three handfuls of earth into the grave. He (or she) twists his hand (*terangai* = twisted hand) while throwing the earth into the grave. The eldest son and other relatives follow the surviving spouse. If the corpse is going to be cremated instead of being buried, the surviving spouse sets fire to the pyre by thrusting a firebrand into it. Again, he employs the twisted hand while setting fire to the pyre (*terangolli* = twisted firebrand).

In ritual circumambulation, movement in the clockwise direction is prescribed for auspicious occasions, while anti-clockwise movement is prescribed for inauspicious occasions. The groom goes round the sacred tripod stool clockwise. A devotee goes round the temple clockwise. But the mourners go round the funeral pyre in the anti-clockwise way. Similarly, the bier is thrice carried round the paved yard before the mourning-house, the bier carriers moving anti-clockwise.

There is an interesting little problem here: while clockwise movement is restricted to auspicious occasions and anti-clockwise movement to inauspicious occasions, on both kinds of occasion the subject goes round thrice. That is to say, both the mourner as well as the groom goes round *thrice*. How is it that the principle

[1] The restrictions observed during the village-deity's festival vary from village to village. As regards the food restrictions observed on the fast day the general idea seems to be to avoid everyday diet and to starve oneself as far as possible. In some festivals only roots and boiled plantains are allowed. Steam-baked pudding (*puṭṭ*), a favourite dish of Coorgs, is prohibited in some places. Green gram *pāyasa* (liquid dish) is generally allowed except in a few villages.

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on the image of the deity are given to a worshipper, he or she sticks them in his hair, or keeps them in his pockets. When such flowers wither, they are either put in a well or pond or on a tree. They are not thrown where people are likely to tread on them.

[796] Quite apart from festivals and other occasions when the dishes cooked in the house are offered to the ancestors before the members themselves partake of them, there are special occasions when the ancestors have to be offered food and drink, and these occasions are the last days (*changrāndi*) of the months of Taurus and Cancer, and the tenth of Libra.

The propitiation of ancestors with food (invariably non-vegetarian) and liquor and lights is called *kāraṇava bhāraṇi*. There is also a more elaborate propitiation of ancestors called *kāraṇava téré* or *kāraṇava kōla*, at which Baṇṇas or Paṇikas officiate as priests and oracles.

This elaborate propitiation of ancestors is prevalent everywhere except Kiggaṭnāḍ. Also there is no uniform rule as to when the propitiation should be performed: each *okka* seems to follow a different rule in this matter. For instance, the Mātanḍra *okka* perform it annually in May, while the Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform it once every few years, while some other *okkas* perform it before a wedding in the house and still others perform it some time after the death of an elderly male. In the last case the object of the propitiation is to convert the spirit of the dead person into a *kāraṇava*. An old saw has it, 'The eleventh should be added to the group of ten'.

The propitiation is invariably performed at the ancestral house. The latter is whitewashed, colour-washed, and the floors washed with a solution of cow-dung. Nowadays the head of that branch of the *okka* which is resident in the ancestral house writes a letter to the heads of the branches living elsewhere, and to other relatives, informing them of the date of the propitiation. On the appointed day they all gather together at the ancestral house, bringing with [785] them their votive offerings of fowl or pig or both. A daughter of the house who has married out might bring with her a votive animal to a *kāraṇava* of her natal *okka*.

The propitiation begins after sundown. Everyone takes a bath, and the head of the house dresses himself in a waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth. If he is very pious he even observes a fast.

The Baṇṇas perform the propitiatory ritual in the central hall of the ancestral house. One of the Baṇṇas acts as oracle (*tiruvaḷkāra*

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or *boiḷchapāḍ*) while another, or two others, beat drums and sing the house song of the propitiating *okka*. The song gives us an account of the life of each ancestor and ancestress. The oracle wears an elaborate equipment called *téré* which consists of two bamboo frames covered with red cloths. One of the two frames covers the lower part of the oracle's body, and the other, the upper part. The lower part is really like a skirt, while the upper part, which is flat and tapers towards the top, is tied to the back by means of a stout cord going round the waist. The *téré* is decorated with tufts and frills of the pith of *pāmbaḷé*.

The Baṇṇa oracle mimics the ancestor who has possessed him. If the ancestor possessing him had a game leg, the oracle limps about, and when an ancestress is possessing him he ties a scarf round his head in the way a woman ties it.

The possession has the quality of drama. Sometimes a certain incident which occurred in the past is restaged during the possession. For instance, *A* of *X okka* was in the service of one of the Rājas, and he was put to death by the Rāja's order. It is alleged that this was due to the machinations of *B* of *Y okka*. Now, when an ancestor-propitiation is performed at *X okka*, the Baṇṇa oracle who is possessed by *A* shouts, 'I was betrayed by *B* of *Y*. I have descendants to proclaim my name. *B* of *Y* has none.' The *okka Y* was about to become extinct through the absence of male heirs when a girl of the *okka Y* was married in the *okka parijé* fashion to a boy of *okka Z*. *Okka Y* no doubt continues to exist today, but through the descendants of a female member and not through an unbroken line of agnatic kindred. Agnatic continuity has more prestige than continuity otherwise achieved. Of course, continuity, however achieved, is better than cessation.[1]

A of *X* was induced to enter the Rāja's service by his father, who was a renowned magician feared by all on the Wynāḍ side of Taṇḍra river. At the ancestor-propitiation mentioned above, the Baṇṇa possessed by the son (*A* of *X*) accuses the Baṇṇa possessed by the father of being the real cause of the former's death, for, but for the father's pressure, the son would no thave entered the service of the Rāja. 'Father' and 'son' start fighting with swords, and blood is

[1] This incident makes it clear that a grave offence against the ethical code results in the ending of the offender's *okka*. It is surprising to note, especially in view of the existence of special customary devices like *okka parijé* and *makka parijé*, that continuity through a female descendant may be regarded as ineffective.

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Guḷika is different from Kūḷi which merely means a spirit or ghost. Kūḷis are troublesome spirits which cause illness, possess people, and have to be propitiated with offerings of food and drink.

XVI

The ancestral house has a special importance to a Coorg: he regards it as sacred, he is bound by very powerful ties to it, and he considers it the proper place where the marriage of a member should be celebrated and where his funeral should be performed. Even today the various branches of an *okka* gather together at the ancestral house during the harvest festival and during the Kāvēri festival. They also gather together for the festival of the local village-deity which may be held annually or biennially, and for the performance of ancestor-propitiation.

The house is swept and cleaned every day, and on special ritual occasions such as a festival or ancestor-propitiation, its walls are colour-washed, and the floor washed with a solution of cow-dung, a common purifying agent all over India. A festival is also a holiday, and the men abstain from agricultural work and perform festival tasks such as hanging up festoons of mango leaves on the lintel above the main door. Everyone has a bath and changes into clean clothes brought by the washerman. A festival also means a feast and the feast may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. All over south India the feasts which are a part of calendar festivals may not include non-vegetarian dishes—this is an idea implicit in Sanskritic Hinduism. Non-Brahmins usually prepare non-vegetarian dishes on the day following the feast.

Coorgs follow other Hindus in preparing purely vegetarian dishes on festival days. Even the ancestors are offered vegetarian dishes at these calendar festivals. But on those occasions which are exclusively devoted to the worship of ancestors meat and pork dishes and arrack are the preferred offerings to them. Some village-deities again require offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor at festivals in their honour.

Another aspect of calendar festivals needs to be referred to here: festivals such as the festival of arms and the harvest festival include games like shooting at a target, running a race, throwing a stone, &c. These games prove an occasion for the expression of the rivalry that exists between the *okkas* in a village or *nāḍ*. Such an

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796 526 578 occasion also canalizes the rivalry that exists in certain forms that are not destructive of the social order. Coorgs themselves treat this part of their calendar festivals as providing an arena for the expression of inter-*okka* rivalry.

596 796 621 Co-operation between *okkas* also receives emphasis at these festivals. Every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) is required to send all the adult males in it to the collective dances which are held at the harvest festival. Again, there is a collective hunt at the end of the harvest festival (and usually at the end of the festivals of the village-deities) to which every *okka* has to send *all* the adult males in it. Failure to do so would result in a fine being levied on the defaulting *okka*.

When the festival of a village-deity is being performed, every *okka* (excluding *okkas* of very low castes) has to send a man to help in festival work such as clearing the weeds growing in the temple compound and on the road along which the deity will be taken out in procession.

There is also a minute division of the ritual tasks among the high caste *okkas* in the village. For instance, the representative of one *okka* carries the image of the deity, while the representative of another *okka* carries a lamp and the representative of yet another *okka* carries the money-box (*cheppu*), and so on. Formerly these tasks were looked upon as privileges, and an *okka* was jealous of the privileges to which it was entitled by tradition and custom.

The village is a unity made up of the various *okkas* in it. The individuality of each participating *okka* and the unity of all the *okkas* in the village[1] are both brought out in Professor Emeneau's description of a dance held at the festival of Bhadrakāḷi at Karavalé-bāḍga near Mercara. Professor Emeneau writes:

> this dance is performed on several days both at the temple and on the dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of each *sib* [*okka*] in the village, carrying each a *koḍi* or staff surmounted by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has the right arm bare and a fold of the turban hanging down his back. If all the male members of a *sib* should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the *koḍi*

[1] Castes like the Poleya are excluded from this unity. It is recognized that such castes perform extremely useful tasks both in day-to-day living and at festivals, but their position in the social hierarchy excludes them from certain positions and tasks. The principle of stratification modifies the idea of the unity of a village.

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must be carried by a member of another *sib* along with that of his own *sib*. It is the *sibs* that are represented at the performance and individuals who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential part of the performance, carry no staffs, do not wear their dress in the distinctive manner of the *sib*-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance which is forbidden for the staff-carriers.[1]

The calendar festivals as well as the festivals of the village-deity emphasize both the solidarity and the individuality of the *okka* in a variety of ways. The games which are a part of some festivals give expression to and canalize inter-*okka* rivalry. All the *okkas* in a village have to co-operate in certain common tasks and games, but even this co-operation is on the basis of the acceptance of the *okka* as the nuclear unit of society. The participation of all the *okkas* in the common tasks stresses not only the unity of the larger groups such as caste, village, and *nāḍ*, but also of the unity and individuality of the participating *okkas*. This is clearly brought out in the dance at Karavalébāḍga.

XVII

Every Coorg *okka* has a relationship of friendship with another Coorg *okka* living not far away. Such friendship is between two *okkas*, and not between the individual members of them. It is traditional and institutionalized. It is usually, though not always, mutual, and the headman and mistress of the friend-*okka* have duties, ritual as well as social, on occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. These duties are in addition to those derived from common membership of the village. (See Chapter II, Section XI.)

It has been stated earlier (see Chapter II, Section XI) that the social stressing of family friendship offset the disadvantage of the lack of any real neighbourhood in a village in Coorg Proper. But isolated as a Coorg *okka* was, it was not completely without neighbours. Only they were not the right kind of neighbours. The Poleya or other low-caste servants of the Coorg *okka* lived in huts near by, but the few small Poleya familie scould not give effective help in beating off a raiding party from another village; and their caste prevented them from participation in the ritual of a Coorg house. They could only do menial jobs and carry messages.

The relationship between a Coorg *okka* and its servant families

[1] 'Kinship and Marriage among the Coorgs', *J.R.A.S.* (Bengal), iv, 1938, p. 124.

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VI

THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

I

796 634 THERE is a considerable body of ritual directly referring to the *okka*, but this is not the case when we come to larger social units such as the village (*ūr*), *nāḍ* (each consisting of a few villages), and *sīmé* or *dēsha* (each consisting of a few *nāḍs*). These large social units were never as closely knit as the *okka*. The festivals of the village-deities constitute an important source of information on these units, even though only a small part of each festival refers directly to them. Of the calendar festivals, only the harvest festival is important. The festivals of the village-deities, the harvest festival, and folklore are the chief sources for this chapter.

624 796 346 776 A 'village-deity' does not necessarily mean the deity of a single village. In fact it is common to find two or three villages combining to celebrate the festival of a village-deity. There is usually more than one deity at the festival of a village-deity. Every temple in a village usually contains more than one deity, one chief deity from whom the temple derives its name, and the rest secondary. For instance, the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi temple in Kuklūr derives its name from the fact that the chief deity in the temple is Bhadrakāḷi. There is a shrine containing her image, and the other deities in this shrine are Gaṇēsha, Sārtāvu (Ayyappa), and a *linga* (representing Shiva) said to have been brought from Benares. Outside the shrine, but inside the temple compound, are stones representing Ayyappa, Pattu Kūṭ Pātāḷa (literally, ten spirits of the underworld), and Kuṭṭatammé (the mother of Kuṭṭa).[1] Besides these, the Poleyas of Kuklūr keep representations of some deities worshipped exclusively by them, outside the temple compound on an improvised platform. All the deities in Kuklūr are considered to be subordinate to Bhadrakāḷi. Very frequently there is more than one temple in a village. In Armēri in Beppunāḍ, for instance, there are

[1] Kuṭṭatammé has a temple to herself in Kuṭṭa in south Coorg. She is a famous deity and an annual festival is held in her honour.

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several temples: one dedicated to Bhagavati, another to Mahādēva, two to Ayyappa, and six to Raktēshwari (identified with Chamuṇḍi). The temples dedicated to Bhagavati, Mahādēva, and Ayyappa have Brahmin priests who worship the deities by using Sanskrit *mantras*, whereas those dedicated to Raktēshwari do not have Brahmin priests, and pigs are sacrificed annually to her. There are two modes of worship, the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, and in the festival of a village-deity these two modes are found mixed in varying proportions.

Usually there is more than one temple in a village, and a temple contains more than one deity. The temples in a village might be either Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic, or might represent varying degrees of compromise between the two elements. Finally, a village-deity might also be the deity of more than one village.

The festival of a village-deity requires a certain amount of co-operation between the various temples in a village, and not infrequently between villages. For instance, the festivals of the various deities in a village are so arranged that they do not clash if not actually dovetail. The festivals of the deities Kētrappa and Chaunḍi in Bēngūr occur at the same time, but they dovetail remarkably considering the elaborateness of the ritual that is performed. A kind of offering known as *térémuḍi* (usually a man wearing *téré* equipment) is sent by both the Bhagavati (in common parlance, Povvedi) and Chaunḍi temples to the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day (which is also called the *nammé* or 'festival day') of the biennial Kētrappa festival.

A few miles from Bēngūr is Balmāvṭi, which has an important temple dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). This deity also has a very elaborate biennial festival, similar to Kētrappa's, but the interesting point is that the two festivals are performed in alternate years. When the 'big festival' of Kētrappa is being performed, Bhagavati of Balmāvṭi has a 'small festival', and vice versa. That is to say, this arrangement implies some co-operation between Begunāḍ and Ballatnāḍ. This is all the more surprising as formerly there was a feud (*maradalé*) between these two *nāḍs*, and this feud seems to have been a long and bitter one.

There is another type of co-operation to which reference must be made here. The Baṇṇas and Maléyas who officiate as oracles and dancers (wearing *téré*) at the festival of Kētrappa come from the villages Saṇṇa Pulikōṭu and Balmāvṭi respectively. The services of

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621 Baṇṇas and Maléyas are in demand in surrounding villages, but
796 they manage to fulfil all their ritual engagements. Similarly,
535 Paṇikas from the village Biḷigunda officiate at the festival of
791 Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. These Paṇikas too are very busy people, serving as they do a number of villages. But the people of Kuklūr have ensured their services by giving them, in the past, an advance (*iḍu*) of Rs50 and two gold bangles. This is paid in addition to the customary fees paid after every festival. The payment of the advance guarantees the Paṇika's attendance and service at the festival. It is clear that the Paṇika or Baṇṇa or Maléya can only fulfil his engagements if the festivals do not clash with each other. The Baṇṇa is essential at the festival of a village-deity, and it is perhaps his list of engagements which ensures co-operation between the villages he serves.

796 The saying 'kētrappang pātradoḍané', meaning 'the entire pot
776 of toddy for Kētrappa', testifies to the deity Kētrappa's great liking
273 for toddy. Part of the ritual of the festival of Kētrappa consists in fetching toddy from the Kopaṭṭi hills, about seven miles from Bēngūr. The Kuḍiyas (a tribe) in the Kopaṭṭi hills tap the toddy, and the festival-priests go to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day of the festival carrying new earthen pots (*kaléyas*) filled with paddy, which is the perquisite of the Kuḍiyas. These pots are brought back on the sixteenth day, and toddy is offered to Kētrappa and other deities in Bēngūr on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days. The Kuḍiyas visit the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day to offer their homage to the deity, watch the ritual, and receive a share of meat and toddy.

Every priestly (*kāvukāra*) *okka* in Bēngūr sends at least one representative to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day. They all leave the village at about 4 a.m., after taking a bath in cold water and donning ritually pure robes. They are in a condition of purity and other villagers may not look at them till they have crossed the boundary of the village. Both when they go to deposit the pots and to bring back the pots full with toddy some esoteric ritual takes
787 place in the Kopaṭṭi hills. The festival-priests are very secretive about it, but I learn that all the ritual centres round the possession of a Kuḍiya oracle by Ayyappa, a deity of the Kuḍiyas in the Kopaṭṭi hills.

796 The festival necessarily implies co-operation between Bēngūr people and a hill tribe living in inaccessible hills covered with

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heavy jungle. A festival of a village-deity usually implies co-operation with the people of another village or *nāḍ*, or with certain castes or tribes living in different villages or *nāḍs*.

II

Village-deities are an All-India phenomenon. By this it is meant that the deities who are worshipped in villages in various parts of India have more or less the same character and attributes, and that the technique of propitiating them is broadly similar. These statements no doubt sound vague and general, but any attempt to make them more precise will have to take account of exceptions at every point.

While the phenomenon is broadly similar all over India, there are important regional variations. Generally speaking, within India, each region or district has a greater unity than the larger area of which it is a part. Inside peninsular India, for instance, each linguistic area represents an area of greater cultural homogeneity and social solidarity. But there are also cultural forms which are common to two or more linguistic areas. Malayāḷam and Tamil areas have certain cultural forms in common; and similarly Kannaḍa, Telugu, and Marāṭhi areas have some cultural forms in common. Within each linguistic area too there are differences: cultural forms present in the centre of a linguistic area might not be present in the peripheral regions or present only in an altered form. Geographical barriers also usually represent cultural barriers. For instance, cultural forms found in the Malabar littoral strip have great difficulty in spreading into the mainland of peninsular India. A country like Coorg, which lies at the periphery of three linguistic areas, Kannaḍa, Malayāḷam, and Tuḷu, has certain cultural forms in common with each of them.

Throughout peninsular India village-deities are represented by unhewn stones or by crude images of stone or wood. They are either housed in shrines which are usually not very elaborate, or simply embedded in the earth without any roof above them. A shrine dedicated to a village-deity is frequently found either at the foot of a tree or in the shade of a grove. Worship may or may not be offered daily at these shrines. There is no uniform rule applicable in this matter. Practice varies from village to village, and even from temple to temple: in some temples worship (*pūja*) is

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346 Lucky indeed were the deities who could count the Rājas of Coorg as their devotees. The Bhaganḍēshwara temple in Bhāgamanḍla, Omkārēshwara temple in Mercara, the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi temple in Kuklūr, and many others have benefited from the munificence of the Rājas.

346 793 The construction of a temple is accompanied by elaborate ritual, and the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara are masters of this ritual. The folksongs frequently refer to a Tantri Brahmin being sent for to supervise the performance of the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple. The Tantri himself knows how to set images more firmly in their bases, revivify deities who have lost power, and so on.

793 796 It is usually a Brahmin from either South Canara or Malabar who is priest at temples dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). Worship is offered to the deity at least once every day in temples where Brahmins are priests. There are, however, temples in which a member of one of the non-Brahmin castes is priest. For instance, a Kannaḍa-speaking Okkaliga is priest at the temple of Kuṭṭatammé in Kuṭṭa; and similarly, the deity Kētrappa has a Coorg priest.

[776] Quite apart from this, in almost every village the very low castes (Mēda and Poleya) have their own deities who are not usually worshipped by the higher castes. The latter refer to such a deity as, for instance, 'Mēdara Ayyappa' (Mēdas' Ayyappa), 'Poleyara dēvaru' (Poleyas' deities), and so on.

The position may be summed up thus: (1) there are first of all temples dedicated to Sanskritic deities, with Brahmin priests, at which only vegetarian offerings are made, and these deities are worshipped by all the high castes.[1] Until recently, Untouchables were not being admitted to such temples. Now, legally, they are entitled to enter them. (2) There are temples where Brahmins are normally priests, the offerings normally vegetarian, and the mode of worship Sanskritic, but on certain occasions such as the festival of the deity the Brahmin withdraws and animals are decapitated before the deity by a non-Brahmin. The Brahmin priest re-enters the temple only after purifying it. (3) Temples where non-Brahmins are priests. Brahmins usually do not have anything to do in such a temple, but lay Brahmins may propitiate such a deity during an

[1] This ignores, however, the distinction into Shaivism and Vaishṇavism, and the fact that the orthodox followers of the one do not generally go to the temples of the other.

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epidemic or other disaster. Brahmins make only offerings of fruits and flowers even when propitiating such a deity.[1] (4) Deities propitiated by one or other of the lowest castes who are rarely propitiated by the upper castes. Such a deity is identified with the caste habitually propitiating him (or her).

Every temple has a headman called *dēva takka*, belonging to one of the high castes, who generally looks after the temple and its property. The *okkas* belonging to the high castes annually pay him a contribution in paddy and cash towards the maintenance of the temple. He, together with the village headman, organizes the elaborate festival of the deity. He has also certain ritual duties at the festival, which vary from village to village. His relation with the village headman too varies from village to village.

Formerly every important temple in a village seems to have had three permanent officials, Mukkāṭi, Neravaṇḍa, and Chengōla. Of these three the last two are defunct today, and only the first-mentioned Mukkāṭi still continues to exist. These offices were hereditary in certain *okkas* and these *okkas* generally belonged to a high caste like Coorg, Gauḍa, smith, and cowherd. The Chengōla looked after the accounts, and the Mukkāṭi swept the temple and lit the lamps, but we do not know what the duties of the Neravaṇḍa were. Mukkāṭi and Neravaṇḍa occur occasionally as surnames of certain Coorg *okkas*.

Every temple has pipers and drummers. These may belong to a high caste like Mārāyas, or a low caste like Mēdas or Poleyas.

In addition to the above, every temple of a village-deity has a number of *kāvukāras* or festival-priests who are active only during the periodical festival. All the high-caste[2] *okkas* in a village are usually festival-priests at the festival of their village-deity. This priesthood, like other offices, is attached to the *okka* and not to the individual members thereof. Both the men and the women of the priestly *okkas* have duties and roles at the festival. The men have such tasks as carrying the idol of the deity, bathing it, and holding

[1] It is possible, however, that in exceptional circumstances a Brahmin might make an offering of a fowl through a non-Brahmin friend. He might also take a wife, sister, or daughter, possessed by a ghost, to a non-Sanskritic temple for cure.

[2] As far as I know the Brahmin is nowhere festival-priest. He is either priest at the temple or performs only purificatory rites during the festival. In the latter case, there is another temple dedicated to a Sanskritic deity, where he performs all the priestly duties every day.

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swords before it while it is being carried in state, while the women carry the sacred dish-lamp and the *pōḷiya* box.[1] Again, each festival-priest may be required to provide a certain votive offering like *kuduré* ('horse'), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), *ettu pōraṭa* (bullock loaded with rice), and so on. The oracles (*tiruvaḷa*) also run traditionally in certain *okkas*.

The entire work of the festival is distributed among the various high-caste *okkas* in the village. (The Mēdas and Poleyas, though they may have important roles, are nowhere festival-priests.) The work is divided meticulously: for instance, at the Kētrappa festival, a man belonging to one *okka* carries Kētrappa's image up to the temple compound and then hands it over to another belonging to a different *okka* who carries it for about 12 feet and places it on a bench. Division of festival labour is thorough and minute, and formerly a duty was looked upon as a privilege.

According to the song sung at the festival of Kētrappa, the *okkas* which are festival-priests today all formed part of the original caravan which went to Malabar and brought the deity to Bēngūr. Incidents which form part of the festival are 'explained' by reference to this caravan: for instance, the Kētrappa image is brought from its normal resting-place which is the Taṭṭanḍa house on the seventeenth day of the festival and deposited in the Aréyanḍa house for three days, after which it is taken back to the Taṭṭanḍa house. This is explained in the song by reference to the fact that the deity stayed in the Aréyanḍa house while a temple was built for him when he first came to Bēngūr. The important fact for us is that the song refers to this incident. The song provides a charter and an explanation of the incidents taking place in the festival.

IV

The festival of Kundat Bhaḍrakāḷi of Kuklūr, near Vīrarājpēṭ in south Coorg, now briefly described, may be regarded as typical of the festivals of village-deities. These festivals last for several days, involve very elaborate and complicated ritual, and imply the co-operation of several castes, and frequently of two or three villages.

[1] The *pōḷiya* box is a box of plaited cane, containing an odd number of measures of rice, odd number of coconuts, plantains, jaggery cubes, and betel leaves and areca-nut. It is carried by a married woman on auspicious occasions such as marriage

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Every village in Coorg, and occasionally two or three villages together, celebrate either annually or once every few years the festival of a village-deity. These festivals have the same structure all over Coorg Proper, and a description of any one of these festivals gives one an idea of the religious life of the people. But this should not lead one to conclude that there are not any important differences between the festivals of different village-deities.

[805] The ritual life of a Coorg is regulated with reference to the very accurate solar calendar which prevails in the Tuḷu-Malayāḷam- and Tamil-speaking areas.[1] The festival of a village-deity starts on a certain day in a particular solar month, and goes on for seven or nine or eleven or fifteen or twenty-one days according to local custom. Local custom again decides the length of the interval between two festivals: it may be a year or two years or more.

The festival of a village-deity usually begins with the *tappaḍaka* ceremony at which all[2] the assembled villagers take a vow to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions till the evening of the *nammé* or 'festival day' which occurs towards the end. At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the tenth day is the 'festival day' and the dietetic restrictions are broken on the tenth night. The eighth day of the festival is the *paṭṇi* or 'fast day', and on this day villagers have to subsist on pancakes and the sweet liquid dish, *pāyasa*.

There is a lull in the ritual after the administering of the vows till the 'fast day'. It does not, however, mean total absence of ritual: some routine ritual acts such as the beating of drums and dancing before the temple of the deity are performed. Also preparations are made for the later important days: the roads and the approaches to the temple are cleared of weeds.

The eighth and tenth days are important days, as mentioned earlier. On the twelfth day there is a dinner for all the men in the village (excluding the Brahmin priests), and the 'village goat' (*ūraḍu*) and the two village fowls (*ūru kōḷi*), sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi on the tenth night, are cooked and eaten at this dinner.

[1] The people in Kannaḍa and Telugu countries regulate their ritual life mainly with reference to the lunar calendar. But the upper castes need to refer to the solar calendar also for some of their festivals and ritual.

[783] [2] Poleyas are usually excluded from participation in these ceremonies. They are either totally excluded from the festival or, where they are allowed to participate, they do so at a different level from the rest. The Mēdas are never excluded from the festival, but are allowed to participate at a different level from the high-caste people on the one hand and the Poleyas on the other. Custom, in this respect, varies from village to village.

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On the first of *kādiyār* (Taurus), at about 8 a.m., the members of Kuklūr village gather together before the temple of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. The Brahmin priest of the temple worships the deity, and then the Bhadrakāḷi oracle, Shri Tātanḍra Kāryappa, becomes possessed by the deity and, while possessed, he issues instructions as to how to conduct the festival. He allots the work of the festival among the various Coorg *okkas* in the village and decides the dates of the fast and festival days. These days as well as the work which each *okka* has to do have already been decided by custom, and one might say that the oracle only decides according to custom. Sometimes, however, he makes minor alterations to suit special circumstances.

An elder of the Moṇṇanḍra *okka* then administers the festival vows to the assembled villagers. The headmanship of the Bhadrakāḷi temple runs in the Moṇṇanḍra *okka*, and to him as *dēva takka* belongs the right of administering oaths. A member of the Kuṭṭanḍa *okka* then dances the 'peacock dance' before the temple, carrying a bundle of peacock feathers. The dancer dances to the beat of the Poleya's drum.

No ritual is performed on the second day. On the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days, the representatives of the Kuṭṭanḍa *okka* dances the peacock dance a hundred and one times round the stone post before the temple. Four Coorgs sing the Bhadrakāḷi song to the beat of a big drum (*dōḷu*).

On the eighth day a partial fast is observed till dusk when a horn is blown which puts an end to the fast. At night, after dinner, there is a fancy-dress (*bōḍu*) show in which Coorg men take part. They dress themselves as *sanyasis*, Māpiḷḷa traders from Malabar, Mēda drummers, and so on. The ways and customs of different castes and people from different parts are satirized in the fancy-dress show. In 1941 (when I witnessed the festival) the marriage of a Coorg girl with a Tamil Mudaliar man was satirized. Coorgs do not approve of marriage with non-Coorgs and this disapproval expresses itself in a variety of ways.[1] Such marriages are still unusual.

After the fancy-dress show at the threshing-yard (*kaḷa*) of the

[1] I remember an attempt to pass a formal resolution of censure against a high-placed Coorg gentlemen who had married a non-Coorg. This was during the harvest festival when the various branches of the *okka* are expected to assemble at the ancestral house. The attempt failed conspicuously as a very important branch of the *okka* living outside Coorg failed to turn up.

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796 621 Nandiyaṇḍa *okka*, those taking part in the fancy-dress as well as the spectators go to the temple along with the Poleya oracles. The latter dance outside the temple, before the platform where representations of their deities are kept. After this dance the fancy-dress men proceed to every high-caste house in Kuklūr, beginning with the house of the *nāḍ*-headman and ending with the house of the Brahmin priest of the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The order in which they should proceed to the various houses has been fixed by custom. At each house the fancy-dress men are treated to coffee, coconut, plantains, and cooked rice dough (*puṭṭ*).

The duties, contributions in cash or kind, and offerings which each Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr has to make are clearly laid down. These duties run in the *okkas* concerned, and they may not be altered except with their consent. When an *okka* dies out or migrates to a different part of Coorg and a new *okka* from outside buys its property, the latter steps into the rights and duties of the former.[1]

The performance of the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi requires the co-operation of several castes. In the case of all the co-operating castes except Coorgs the contribution to the work of the festival is on the basis of caste. In the case of Coorgs, however, it is on the basis of *okka*. Every Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr is a priestly *okka* at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi.

The Māḷeṭṭira, Moṇṇaṇḍra, and Nandiyaṇḍa *okkas* are each required to make offerings of an *ettu pōraṭa* (rice loaded on a pair of bullocks), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), and *kuduré* ('horse'). These offerings are made on different days towards the end of the festival. A young boy from each of the three *okkas* is dressed as a girl and he is called a 'prostitute'. On the eleventh afternoon the three 'prostitutes' run a race and this is followed by a race of the three 'horses'.

A hollow 'horse', minus legs and tail, is made with plaited split bamboo, and in the middle of its back the 'horse' has an opening large enough to allow a man's head and shoulders to pass through. One man sits on the shoulders of another and the head and shoulders of the top man are made to pass through the opening in the bamboo 'horse'. The lower man's head is hidden by the bamboo frame. The frame is decorated with garlands of flowers.

[1] At the Kĕtrappa festival the immigrant Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* now perform all the duties which once belonged to the Ayyaṇḍa *okka*. The latter died out and the Paṭṭamāḍa bought their lands and settled down in Bĕngūr.

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On the ninth afternoon the villagers go in state to the Bhadrakāḷi temple, accompanied by the three 'horses'.[1] The latter run round the inner shrine thrice. After this is over, Coorg men dance the 'torch dance' (*boḷakāṭ*)—actually they hold in their hands swords (*kaḍatalés*) or *chauris* (yak-tail whisks). Four Coorg drummers stand in the centre of the circle formed by the dancers, beating their small drums. As they beat the drums they sing the Bhadrakāḷi song. The outer circle of dancers do not, however, sing this song, but a different one which consists mostly of the names of deities interspersed with short interjections such as *'ho!'*, *'ha!'*, and *'he!'*: people dancing the torch dance always sing such a song.

After the dance is over, the Brahmin priests treat the Coorg devotees to coffee, and a dish made of parched rice mixed with jaggery and grated coconut. Coorgs sit on the steps all round the shrine and the Brahmins serve them, taking care, however, not to touch them. Only the priests may enter the kitchen or the inner shrine.[2]

The Poleyas who stand outside the temple compound then light reed torches in honour of one of *their* deities. They frequently shake the torches and this sends forth a shower of sparks. This is called *tūḍ nammé* (torch festival). They then let fly twenty-five chickens which perch on the roof of the temple compound. The upper-caste people who are inside the temple now climb up the roofs and catch the chickens, which belong to those who catch them.

The Poleya is normally the servant of the Coorg. He works for his master in the latter's field and house, and in return for this he is paid in paddy and straw annually. Usually the Poleya, like the Brahmin, is the receiver of goods from the Coorg.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival the live chickens offered by Poleyas ultimately reach their Coorg masters. It is like a gift by Poleyas as a caste to Coorgs as a caste, and such a gift emphasizes inter-caste solidarity. Caste has a natural tendency to stress

[1] Any other *okkas* which have vowed to make offerings of 'horses' also join the procession.

[2] The Brahmins usually receive material goods in exchange for the ritual services they perform. Every *okka* in the village annually gives the local Brahmins a certain amount of paddy and straw during harvest. This is in addition to payments for specific services. During the festival the Brahmin gives the members of the village some cooked food which has been earlier consecrated by being offered to the deity.

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796 horizontal ties and this has to be balanced by stressing vertical [564] ties periodically.

In the case of the Brahmin the dishes prepared for offering to the deity also become gifts to people who normally contribute to the upkeep of the temple and its priest. The Brahmin and Poleya, though they stand at either extreme of the social scale, are similar in this, that they are normally receivers of goods at the hands of Coorgs and others. During the festival they make token returns which, while negligible economically, are enough to stress the goodwill prevalent between the various sections of a village community.[1]

The tenth day, the festival day, is the most important day of the festival Visitors come from surrounding villages to witness the ritual that is performed on this day at the temple. A ritual fast is observed till about 10 p.m., and adult villagers subsist till then on pancakes and *pāyasa*.

The morning is devoted to making preparations for the rites in the evening, and for cooking. Some time in the afternoon the villagers go in procession to the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The procession is led by Poleya oracles who walk with their faces to the Bhadrakāḷi oracle and the crowd. Pack-bullocks carrying votive offerings of rice (*ettu pōraṭa*) form part of the procession.

[791] The Poleya oracles stop outside the temple, before the wooden platform on which an image and representations of their deities are placed. The villagers go into the temple driving their pack-bullocks before them and walk round the Bhadrakāḷi shrine thrice. [534] They then dance the torch dance in the temple yard, holding yak-tail whisks or swords in their hands.

Drummers belonging to the Mārāya caste beat big drums called *chaṇḍés* while the Brahmin priests worship Bhadrakāḷi inside the shrine using Sanskrit *mantras*. Devotees, Coorgs as well as others, who pay the requisite fees, can have worship performed by the priest to the deity in their names.

796 Meanwhile, the Bhadrakāḷi oracle stands behind the shrine and 787 people put questions to him on matters concerning their welfare: one wants to know whether his wife will recover from an illness, another why he has suffered from a series of misfortunes in the last

[1] They are alike in that both are excluded from the activities of the middle castes. Extreme purity excludes the Brahmin while extreme impurity excludes the Untouchable.

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few years, a third man whether he should go ahead with a business or other venture he has been contemplating for some time, and so on. (He answers questions again that night.)

Outside the temple compound Poleya oracles are possessed by their deities. They run about possessed, and their possession comes to an end when the possession of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle comes to an end. While possessed, the Poleya oracles may be called upon to exorcise evil spirits from people.

After the possession stops, devotees make offerings of money (*kāṇiké*) to the deity.[1] Miniature silver representations of a human being, of any part of the body, and of a cradle are made by those who had vowed to make such offerings on recovery from an illness, or recovery of the normal use of an organ, or the birth of a child, respectively.[2]

The afternoon concludes with the Brahmin priests' offering to the devotees parched rice sweetened with jaggery and coffee. The villagers then disperse.

V

At about 9 p.m. the people of Kuklūr and sightseers from other villages gather together at the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanḍa *okka*. Mēdas and Poleyas play on their drums and pipes, and Coorg men and boys dance to their music. Four villagers beat the big drum (*dōḷu*), singing the drum song which is about Bhadrakāḷi. Votive animals, to be offered to Bhadrakāḷi, are all assembled here before being driven to the temple. In 1941 there were twenty-three sheep, three goats, and fifty fowls. This was exclusive of one 'village goat' (*ūrāḍu*) and two 'village fowls' (*ūru kōḷi*) which are subscribed for by the entire village.[3]

With a brass mask of Bhadrakāḷi as nucleus, a Paṇika builds a circular *téré*—a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of the *pāmbaḷé* plant. This *téré* is leaned against two pegs and then the Paṇika worships it. He kills a chicken and cooks it in

[1] Collections are also made on the ninth and eleventh days. The expenses of the festival are met out of the money raised at the collections. Rs110 was collected on the tenth day.

[2] This custom prevails all over south India.

[3] It is known that formerly between 300–400 animals were annually sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi. The number has fallen off very greatly now. A very small section of Coorg opinion would like to do away with animal sacrifice altogether.

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the immense fire that is burning several yards from the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*. The chicken and a little toddy are offered to the *téré* representing Bhadrakāḷi.

The Paṇika dancer gets ready for his performance which begins an hour later. He wears tiny bells (*gaggaras*) round his ankles, paints his face red and yellow, wears a turban, and ties an elaborate red skirt round his waist. He stands there waiting for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive and give him permission to place the circular *téré* on his head. The *téré* is kept flat on the head and held by one hand while the Paṇika dances and sings a song in praise of Bhadrakāḷi.

Three Poleyas, oracles of deities worshipped only by Poleyas, also wait for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive. The latter rushes into the Nandiyaṇḍa threshing-yard, stamps on the roaring fire with bare feet, and then touches the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*, signifying that the Paṇika may now place it on his head. He then rushes to the temple, where he starts dancing a very vigorous dance before the shrine of Bhadrakāḷi.

A change is noticeable in the Poleya oracles as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle rushes in. The deities of the Poleyas are regarded as subservient to, and dependent upon, Bhadrakāḷi, who is the deity of the higher castes. And the oracles, who are Poleyas of the deities of the Poleyas, are also regarded as inferior to, dependent upon, the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi, who is a Coorg. Thus the structural distance between Coorgs and Poleyas expresses itself in every sphere.

Two Poleya oracles run to and fro, with swords in their hands, while the third, the oracle of the deity Pūda, writhes on the ground and groans, while the Bhadrakāḷi oracle is stamping on the fire with bare feet. He stops groaning and writhing as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle leaves the threshing-yard.

The villagers place the *téré* on the Paṇika's head. The latter starts singing a song in Maylayāḷam in honour of Bhadrakāḷi. The entire body of villagers, headed by the Poleya oracles marching with their faces to the crowd, then run to the temple. The Poleyas stop outside the temple while the others go in. The votive sheep also may not go in, and they remain outside the temple. They are later sacrificed outside the temple.

The villagers go into the temple and walk round the shrine thrice. The village goat heads the procession inside the temple.

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Once the third round is completed, the Paṇika dances before the shrine. The villagers let off fireworks, the Mārāyas beat drums, and there is general tumult and shouting.

The Bhadrakāḷi oracle executes a vigorous dance for about forty-five minutes before the shrine. After the dance is over he selects two swords out of a number offered by the Brahmin priest and then proceeds to the roofed platform at the entrance to the temple, where he declares how many of the votive animals may be sacrificed to the Poleya deities. Then he proceeds to place one sword on his head and hit it with the other. Soon his head is covered entirely with blood. The Poleya oracles gash themselves following the Bhadrakāḷi oracle. The latter then proceeds to the veranda of the shrine, where he gashes himself more. This gashing is called *narāhuti* (human sacrifice). After the oracle has stopped gashing himself he answers questions. He orders the Paṇika to cease dancing and remove the *téré*. The Brahmin priest then offers him consecrated water which he drinks. The priest begs the oracle, identified with Bhadrakāḷi, to pardon the lapses which might have occurred through ignorance and to leave the village without inflicting any harm. The oracle orders those present to conduct the festival properly, and then the possession ceases.

The oracle is completely identified with the deity supposed to be possessing him. Even the Brahmin priest believed that the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi was really the deity herself. It was temporarily forgotten that he was a Coorg by caste. There was a look of fear on the priest's face when he was requesting the deity (the oracle) to leave the village without harming anyone. But though the oracle is identified with Bhadrakāḷi, he does not enter the innermost room where Bhadrakāḷi's image is kept. That is to say, the implications of the identification of the oracle with Bhadrakāḷi are not fully worked out. Only the priest may go into the innermost room, and this rule is not relaxed in favour of the oracle who is temporarily identified with Bhadrakāḷi.

After the Bhadrakāḷi oracle returns to his normal condition, the priest shuts the door of the shrine and goes home. Women, children, and a good many spectators also leave. Only the festival-priests and other functionaries remain, along with those who have brought the votive animals, to witness the decapitation that follows. The Paṇika, whose duty it is to sacrifice the animals brought by devotees, makes a small incision in the little finger of his left hand

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796 782 before decapitating the animals. As soon as a few drops of blood drip from his finger, he sacrifices the 'village fowls'. Then he decapitates the 'village goat' before the shrine. The decapitation of the other animals takes place only after the decapitation of the 'village fowls' and 'village goat'. The Paṇika receives as his perquisite the heads of the 'village goat' and of all the fowls.

After all the animals have been cut, the assembled villagers turn their backs on the scene of carnage and remain silent for a few minutes. This is to enable the deity to consume the essence of the sacrificed animals in peace. They then turn round and sing the *ānanda pāṭ* (the song of joy), after which the villagers depart for their homes with the headless carcasses. The headless 'village goat' is tied to a high branch of the *dēva kaṇigalé* (oleander) tree near the temple. It remains suspended there till noon of the twelfth day, when it is taken down and cooked for the communal dinner. It is said that vultures and kites do not touch the carcass of the 'village goat', nor does the flesh go bad as it normally would in the heat of summer. This is attributed to the power of Bhadrakāḷi.

VI

796 [783] On the eleventh morning a representative of the Karṇaṇḍra *okka* cleans the temple yard of bloodstains and he is paid three *paṇas* (about nine annas) for performing this duty. The Brahmin priest then ritually purifies the temple and temple yard by sprinkling consecrated water everywhere and uttering the appropriate Sanskrit *mantras*.

Races are held on the eleventh afternoon for 'prostitutes' (*chūḷé*) and for 'horses' (*kudure*). The Māḷeṭṭira, Moṇṇaṇḍra, and Nandiyaṇḍa *okkas* are each required to send one 'prostitute' and one 'horse' for the races. 'Prostitutes' and 'horses' are regarded as votive offerings. For instance, when a boy is ill, his parents might [782] make a vow to the effect that they will dress him up as a 'prostitute' at the coming festival.

Getting the 'prostitute' and 'horse' ready in time is not very easy, and clear, if elaborate, rules are laid down requiring certain *okkas* to help each of the three *okkas* charged with the responsibility of making the offerings. For instance, the Tātaṇḍra *okka* is required to help the Māḷeṭṭira *okka*, the Kuṭṭaṇḍra *okka* (now split into two) to help the Moṇṇaṇḍra *okka*, and the Māḷeṭṭira *okka* to help

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the Nandiyanḍa *okka* to get the 'prostitute' ready. Elaborate rules are again laid down as to which *okkas* should help each of the three *okkas* concerned to get the 'horse' ready. The punctilious regard for detail is characteristic of the festivals of village-deities.

The Moṇṇanḍra 'prostitute' and 'horse' are conducted by the Poleya oracles to the Moṇṇanḍra rice-fields, and after leaving them there, the Poleya oracles accompany the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to the Māḷeṭṭira house. Together they escort the Māḷeṭṭira 'prostitute' and 'horse' to the Moṇṇandra rice-fields. Finally, the entire body proceed to the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanḍa *okka*, where they meet the latter's 'prostitute' and 'horse'. At first, the three 'horses' run a race and then the 'prostitutes' follow suit.

The villagers, oracles, 'horses', and 'prostitutes' then proceed to the temple, where they walk round the shrine thrice. The 'prostitutes' and 'horses' perform a dance and this is followed by the villagers dancing the 'torch dance'.

Tengé pōré or 'coconut scramble' takes place afterwards. The *nāḍ-* or temple-headman holds a coconut aloft in his right hand, and this is a signal for youths to gather round him. He then lowers his right hand and stretches it horizontally before him. This is a sign for the youths to try and snatch it from him. After snatching the coconut, the man in possession of it has to run a few yards to a stone where he should break it, but before he does this, anyone may pounce on him and snatch the coconut from him. He who breaks it on the stone is the winner. He is given a prize.

The Brahmin priest then worships the goddess, using Sanskrit *mantras*, and this brings the proceedings to an end on the eleventh day.

On the twelfth morning there is an elaborate purification rite which the priest performs before the assembled villagers. The accounts of the money-offerings made on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh days are checked. Out of this sum fees are paid to the priest, oracles, cooks, Mārāya drummers, Paṇika, and Mēda, and Poleya musicians. The Bhadrakāḷi oracle then decides how much money should be spent on the evening's dinner.

The 'village goat' is brought down from the tree, cut up, and cooked into curry along with the 'village fowls'. There is a huge dinner at which all the villagers take part. Toddy is also served at this dinner, as at other village dinners.

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VII

791 The Bhadrakāḷi oracle plays a most important and, to the out-
7% sider, rather puzzling role in the festival. He directs the festival at every stage and these directions are given while he is believed to be possessed by the deity whose oracle he is.

It should be remembered here that the tasks which each *okka* has to perform in the festival and the contributions it is required to make are all determined by custom. The oracle rarely sets aside or countermands these tasks and contributions, and he does so only when there are good reasons: for instance, if the sole adult male representative of one of the concerned *okkas* is seriously ill during the festival the oracle will ask another *okka* to take over the duties of the sick man.

Sometimes the oracle is given the discretionary power to act with some latitude. For instance, he is required to allot some of the votive animals brought by the upper-caste devotees to the deities of the Poleyas. In 1941, when I witnessed the festival, he did not allot any goat to the Poleya deities as only three goats had been brought as offerings. The Poleya deities had to rest content with a few sheep and fowls.

The oracle also decides which day of the festival should be the fast-day or *paṭṇi*. He usually chooses the eighth day, but if it is unsuitable for some reason or other, he chooses an earlier or later day.

[787] The point to note is that all these instructions are issued while the oracle is believed to be possessed by the deity. The oracle's words are regarded as the deity's words. Coorgs commonly talk about 'the deity said this', and 'the deity did that', and it is only after a while that the outsider understands that they are referring to the oracle's acts and words. The oracle no doubt issues instructions while possessed, but these instructions only restate, confirm, and support what has already been decided by custom. The oracle exercises his discretionary power only in certain known and definite contexts.

The villagers know every step of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle beforehand. They tell you that 'he will be running in a minute', or that 'he will be gashing his head', and so on. It is like a play which they have seen before and you have not.

Shri Tātaṇḍra Kāryappa is the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi and unlike

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other Coorgs he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. People respect him greatly for his piety. He is frequently contrasted with other oracles, who, in their day-to-day lives, are neither conspicuously pious nor virtuous.

Poleyas may not enter the temple of Bhadrakāḷi. Images and representations of their deities are placed on an improvised platform outside the temple compound. The Poleya oracles dance before this platform.

Some of the duties performed by the Poleyas, however, require them to exercise power over people belonging to the higher castes, and this has the effect of compensating them for the low position they normally occupy in the caste structure. The Poleya oracles who dance before their deities have the power to spot any stranger trying to enter the temple. They also exorcise evil spirits from possessed persons who may frequently belong to a high caste.

Votive animals are brought on the tenth day to Bhadrakāḷi mostly by the members of the high castes. A few of these are allotted to the Poleya deities by the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi. While half of each decapitated animal before Bhadrakāḷi is shared by *okkas* belonging to the high castes in Kuklūr, the animals decapitated before Poleya deities are not so shared. The Poleyas share among themselves the animals decapitated before their deities. The allotment of some of the animals brought by members of the high castes to the Poleya deities constitutes a gift by the high castes to Poleyas. This might be regarded as a return gift for the twenty-five chickens which were 'given' on the ninth day by the Poleyas to the high-caste people.

The position of the Poleyas varies from festival to festival. In some festivals the exclusion aspect seems to be stressed to the neglect of other aspects, whereas in certain others, along with the exclusion-aspect, the solidarity-aspect and the compensation-aspect are all stressed, but with the first mentioned predominating over the others.

VIII

The village is a social unit of considerable strength, and this is in spite of the fact that caste-ties are always tending to stretch beyond the village (and even *nāḍ*). A village is a multi-caste association and the unity of the village always demands that caste-ties

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are checked sufficiently to prevent their overflowing the village, and that unity with other castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy is stressed. This was easier in the past because the hierarchy was tacitly accepted by the people, and low castes like Mēdas and Poleyas did not object to participating with the other castes in the village at a lower level, or even being completely excluded on certain ritual occasions. Again the widespread prevalence of feuds between villages and between *nāḍs* tended to emphasize the unity of the village and check the segmentary action of caste.

At the *tappaḍaka* ritual, the members of the village or *nāḍ* celebrating the festival of the local village-deity undertake to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions while the festival lasts. The villagers may not kill an animal or break an egg or coconut for the table; and toddy may not be tapped within the village. Villagers who want to consume these articles have to import them from outside. The festival-priests, who are more important than ordinary villagers, may not consume even imported meat and toddy. They have to observe strict vegetarianism and teetotalism. They are also required to observe strict continence and avoid touching laymen.

In the Kētrappa festival, women in their periods are required to leave the village and return to it only after the festival is over. Such a woman is in a condition of pollution; and her presence in the village is regarded as inconsistent with the ritual status of the village. People in a condition of birth- or death-pollution are also not allowed to participate in the festival.

No marriage may be performed during the festival. If a person dies in the village he has to be buried quietly, without the customary firing of guns and band.

These restrictions serve to show that the village (or *nāḍ*) is the concerned entity in the festival. The restrictions increase as concern increases—the festival-priests have to observe more restrictions than the laymen. The village (or *nāḍ*) observing the festival is marked off from other villages by these restrictions. Every villager knows that failure by any one of them to observe the restrictions might result in some misfortune to the entire village. The unity of the village is projected to the 'mystical' plane and is supported by ritual sanctions.

A brief account of a part of the ritual of enumeration of restric-

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tions at the harvest festival is necessary here. The headman of the most important temple in the village begans by asking whether everyone (every adult male, that is to say) is present.

The village-headman replies,[1] 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Village-headman: 'Has the *okka* which has committed the wrong, the one who stays outside (Poleyas), the one who heats and beats (Airis or smiths), the one who lifts and beats (Maḍivāḷas or washermen), without a single absentee, is everyone assembled here?'

Temple-headman: 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Temple-headman: 'He who knew how to sing, but refused to sing or dance at the festival, or when the villagers went singing and dancing to his house, he did not open the closed door, or he did not remove the bell-metal dining-dish leaned against the wall, or he did not light the sacred wall-lamp, or he did not mix with another, or he abused another villager during the festival, or he beat another villager all over the body, such a man shall pay a fine of forty-eight *paṇas* for violating the injunctions of god.' Saying this the temple-headman extends his palm towards the village-headman who strikes it as witness to the statement.

The above rite makes it clear that the members of every caste in the village, including the Poleyas, attended the meeting of the village-assembly, and that everyone in the village had to observe certain rules and restrictions during the festival. The villagers had to keep their houses clean, with the doors open to receive a party of singers and dancers, with the sacred wall-lamp lit, they had to join in the singing and dancing, and finally they had to refrain from quarrelling, whatever the provocation. Failure to observe these rules was punished with a heavy fine.

At the festival of a village-deity *tappaḍaka* ritual is performed in the beginning and the restrictions enumerated to the members of the village (or *nāḍ*), whereas in the harvest festival *tappaḍaka* is an occasion for meting out punishment to those guilty of

[1] I have given above a translation of the formulas as they occur in *Paṭṭōlé Paḷumé*, pp. 239–40.

In Kaḍiyetnāḍ the temple-headman, or a temple official, opens the proceedings, whereas near Mercara the village-headman does it. The person who has to reply again varies from region to region: it may be the village- or temple-headman, or some elder.

The date of the ritual of the enumeration of restrictions also varies from region to region.

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796 688 misdemeanour during the festival. Again, the latter may be regarded as more secular than the former: at the festivals of the village-deities the members of the village take a vow in the name of god to keep the rules and restrictions, whereas at the harvest festival no such vow is taken.

796 [535] At the end of the harvest festival there is a village dance (*ūr kōlu*) in which all the adult males in the village have to take part; and on the following day, or two days later, there is a dance for the entire *nāḍ* to which every village belonging to the particular *nāḍ* sends its representatives. Each village makes a special point of sending its best dancers to the *nāḍ* dance.

[224] The village dance is followed by a collective hunt by the villagers. (A collective hunt may also be organized by a *nāḍ*.) Every adult male in the village is required to be present at the hunt, and a successful hunt implies a co-ordination of the activities of numerous individuals. Lack of proper co-ordination has to be paid for with life or limb.

[527] The festivals of village-deities, the harvest festival, and the festival of arms all terminate with a dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*). The boar that is killed in the collective hunt is cooked on this occasion. If the game is not enough to go round, then one or two domesticated pigs or goats are slaughtered in addition. Each house brings its own cooked rice-flour to the dinner. The headman selects five men to serve food to the men.

The men bring halves of coconut shells or leaf-cups for liquor: a young man is given only one cup of liquor while an elder is entitled to more. The singers get an extra share of meat and liquor. The Poleyas do not sit with the rest, but are given a quantity of meat and liquor which they consume by themselves.

[521] Both the village dance and the village hunt stress the unity of the village. In the case of the village hunt, there is the additional element of the threat of danger from the boar or tiger or other wild animal. The village dinner is rightly called *ūrormé* or 'village harmony', as it maintains and increases the harmony of the village.

IX

634 628 Like the village and *okka*, the *nāḍ* is a real social unit and not a mere administrative division imposed from above by the Rājas. In fact, before the political integration of Coorg by the Rājas, the maximum political unit seems to have been a union of two or three

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their minds with leadership and precedence. In their folksongs, not only a group of men, but also a herd of cattle and a bunch of flowers have their leaders. And there the usual epithet by which a headman is referred to is *mūpayanda*, which means 'having precedence'. The sense of precedence is ubiquitous: formerly, when caravans from every *nāḍ* went to Malabar every summer, the senior headman's pack-bullocks marched ahead of the pack-bullocks of the others.

Ideas about precedence are expressed on ritual occasions. For instance, most festivals of Coorgs include the sport of shooting at a target (*kuri*): a coconut and, on either side of it, a plantain spathe are tied to the high branch of a tree, and the competitors have to shoot at the coconut from a distance. The headman of the village has the right to shoot first at the target. Again, at the village dance held during the harvest festival, the village-headman, or an expert dancer selected by him, leads the dance. The temple-headman comes next after the village-headman.

At the *nāḍ* dance, which is held a day or two after the village dance, precedence is very important. The dancers of each village forming part of the *nāḍ* gather together at their headman's house, whence they proceed to the *nāḍ* green with band. When the senior *nāḍ*-headman arrives with his men everyone present has to stand up. A mat is spread for him, and others may sit down only after him. If *nāḍ*-headmen from other *nāḍs* come to the dance, they sit to the left of the host *nāḍ*-headman, observing a strict order of seniority between them. Every dancer is provided with a pair of sticks. The host *nāḍ*-headman leads the dance, with the guest *nāḍ*-headmen occupying positions immediately next to him. The temple-headman comes after the guest *nāḍ*-headmen, and the various village-headmen who are gathered there take up positions after the temple-headman.

The guests are received with band when they arrive, and after the dancing and sports are over, they are given refreshments which nowadays consist of coffee, soft drinks, fruits, and betel leaves and areca-nut. Each guest *nāḍ*-headman pays a *paṇa* to the hosts before leaving. The hosts accompany each guest a little distance, the host's band proceeding ahead of the party. When all the guests have left, the villagers conduct their own *nāḍ*-headman in state to his house. They dine in his house, after which they disperse.

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796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
[574] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
[574] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *duḍi* (small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the villagers frequently move about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the head of these processions walks the *nāḍ*-headman's wife carrying
[778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nāḍ*-headman's wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation, and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[556] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that frequently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

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on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of Kāṭakēri, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted on perjurors.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life have been responsible for undermining the authority of the headmen.

XI

Formerly, two or three neighbouring *nāḍs* came together occasionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong contains an appeal (*éyi koḍ*) to an assembly of the elders of two *nāḍs* from an assembly of the elders of a single *nāḍ*. Another folksong refers to the elders of three *nāḍs* meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest festival requires the co-operation of several *nāḍs*. The ritual cutting of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival, and this has to be performed during a particular period on a particular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the Pāḍi Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assembled headmen of Pāḍināḷknāḍ of his decision. This is later conveyed to every *nāḍ*, village, and *okka*.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kaḍiyetnāḍ people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the decision of the astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi. The acceptance produced uniformity in very many *nāḍs*. Such ritual uniformity provides common values and makes possible the integration of several *nāḍs* into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the barriers between *nāḍ* and *nāḍ*, and between caste and caste.

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VIII

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

I

243 788 COORG is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their *okkas* living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg *okka*, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg *okka* directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

243 [438] A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) participated. The festivals of the village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

423 778 784 The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head, while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not consistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.

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to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (*tāli*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour.

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which

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he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

The Kaṇiya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspicious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree. He also decides when the village or *nāḍ* should have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

The branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport. An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandalwood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons.[1] The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

[1] A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

In this respect they were treated like Kshatriyas and other twice-born castes.

When they came of age, the eleven sons married the hundred daughters of the King of Vidharbadēsha, the eldest son Dēvakānta marrying twenty girls, the second son, sixteen, the third, twelve, and so on.

Chandravarma retired with his two wives to the Himālayas to meditate on Shiva and Pārvati. Before his departure he told his children that Pārvati would be reborn in Coorg as the River Kāvēri and that they would be happy as long as they continued to worship Shiva and Pārvati, and the Brahmins.

Each of the sons of Chandravarma had more than a hundred sons. They were all very strong men, with nails as sharp and powerful as the tusks of boars. With their nails they levelled the ground and tore up the forests, and generally reclaimed land.

> 'Then they settled themselves anew in the country, the face of which they had changed by the strength of their own arms. Around them they planted houses and families of Brahmins and other castes. Because this re-establishment of the country resembled the renowned deeds of the *varahāvatāra* (the boar-incarnation of Vishṇu),[1] the country of Chandravarma's sons was henceforth called Krōdadēsha, and its inhabitants 'Krōda people'. The word Krōda is said to have been changed and corrupted by degrees into Koḍagu, which is the present, and probably was the original name of the country.'[2]

Two days before the first of Libra, when the Kāvēri festival is celebrated annually, Pārvati appeared in a dream to Dēvakānta, the King of Coorgs, and ordered him to assemble his people in a place called Balmuri, where she would meet them. Accordingly, all Coorgs assembled there to greet Pārvati in the form of a river. The river came rushing down the valley, and the violence of the flood pushed the frontal knots of the women's *saris* to their backs, and even now Coorg women push the frontal knot to the back in memory of their first bathe in the Kāvēri. Pārvati appeared in person before the assembled Coorgs, and told them to ask a boon of her. Coorgs asked for children, wealth, a kingdom for themselves, and a priest, and Kāvēri granted them everything they asked for.

It is clear from the brief summary of the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* given above that it is Brahminical in origin. Brahmins are praised in it, conferred wealth and other privileges, and Coorg kings are told that they should 'establish holy Brahmins' in their land.

[1] A demon named Hiraṇyāksha dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea. Vishṇu assumed the form of a boar (*varāha*) and rescued the earth after slaying the demon at the end of a contest lasting a thousand years.

[2] Op. cit., p. 224. *Krōdha* means 'anger, wrath, and passion'.

2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5

It is the sib, moreover, that
614 takes part in the communal affairs of village or district through
182 its headman; though all the affairs of the country must have been conducted by the hierarchy built up on this basis in the days before the rajahs and the British government, nowadays it is only social matters that are governed in this way and even these now tend to find their settlement in the courts. In some
614 religious ceremonies the sibs rather than the individuals seem
796 to play the chief part, e.g. at the village Karavaleba:daga near Mercara at the padra:|inamme (ceremony of Bhadrakāḷi) in the month mi:nia:ru, a dance called kodia:ṭu, is performed on several days both at the temple and on the dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of each sib in the village, carrying each a kodi, or staff surmounted by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has his right arm bare and a fold of his turban hanging down his back. If all the male members of a sib should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the kodi must be carried by a member of another sib along with that of his own sib. It is the sibs that are represented at the performance, and individuals who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential part of the performance, carry no staffs, do not wear their dress in the distinctive fashion of the sib-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance, which is forbidden for the staff-carriers. Again, in the Huttari festival (Coorg name: [243] puṭĕri), when the first ceremonial cutting of the rice-harvest takes place, the ceremony should be performed not at each house of a sib, but at their original sib-house, the traditional center of the sib. It is only the wide geographical spread of a sib and the inconvenience that would result if the far-flung families had to gather in one small locality that makes it allowable for some families of a sib to hold their celebration at their separate dwelling-houses.

614 The sibs are exogamous. This rule has been stated by Ananthakrishna Iyer in the form that no marriage is possible between two persons of the same family name. This however is not quite accurate. The number of sibs in Coorg is unknown; some indication of their number is given by the fact that one of the large and prominent sibs is connected directly, i.e. by marriage of its members, with some fifty-five other sibs. But in the case of some of the sibs which have representatives in most of the villages of Coorg, the spread over the whole country is of so ancient a date that it is not remembered what the relationship is between some of the more distant branches. In such cases the Coorgs regard the sub-divisions as distinct sibs, and intermarriage is allowed between the branches; i.e. in these exceptional cases two persons of the same sib-name may marry, if there is no known relationship between the two branches and if there is no more recent relationship between the individuals.

2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5

585 and is unable to touch cooking utensils and causes her family
[114] inability to take part in ceremonies as does a woman after child-birth is definitely untrue and is vigorously contradicted by my informants. After a short period her husband is invited by her family and with a companion he comes and takes her to his house and thereafter she lives there.

[587] Of the two ceremonies, mu:rta and sammanda, the latter ceremony is performed at every marriage. The former can be performed for a woman only once in her life, however many times she marries, and so is not done when she remarries. For a man, on the other hand, it is performed each time he marries. Consequently, if a widower marries a widow, the mu:rta is performed for him alone and on the following day the sammanda is performed, giving the woman rights in his sib.

114 In giving this account of the institutions and ceremonies of Coorg marriages I have in many places tacitly corrected previous accounts, especially that given by Richter. On examining his description it was found that very many of the details as given by him were vigorously contradicted by my informants. It has not seemed necessary to draw attention in most cases to the discrepancy between my account and his. My account has been carefully checked with a number of Coorgs of some age and experience and from a number of localities within the large district whose institutions I have described. It will be found, I think, that wherever my account and Richter's disagree, mine may be accepted as correct.

115 The main part of the information presented was furnished by Mrry. K. Calappa Avl., retired sub-magistrate and additional sub-judge, Mercara, Coorg, to whom I must record my gratitude for this and for the linguistic information which he gave me
124 freely over a period of eight months in 1936-37. His information
114 was supplemented for this paper by many conversations with other Coorgs and by attending and making notes at several weddings to which I was hospitably invited.

Appendix I.

Readmission of a woman to her father's sib.

586 If a widow wishes to marry a man of a different sib from that of her
587 first husband, or if, as happens rarely, she wishes because of ill-treatment
614 to return to her father's house, a ceremony of readmission to her father's
796 sib and renunciation of all claims to a part in her first husband's sib is necessary. After all arrangements have been made, a formal ceremony (called kallupara kaypé 'the ceremony of the pebbles') takes place at the nellaki of her first husband's house. Representatives of the two sibs and the aruvés of the two sibs gather. The movable property of the woman, her clothes, etc., are brought to the nellaki. The parties separate into two lines as in the sammanda, and the aruvé of the woman's sib
[539] says: daṇḍu kaḍe na:ḍo:mu:illavé nu:bendu: aṇṇanaruvénu: na:lu kōḷi nindira:.

2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5

'People of the district in two parties and people of the house and relatives and aruvēs, have you formed lines and stood?' (The wording as given is slightly different from that of the introductory sentence of the sammanda, but the intent is identical, and either wording or others still different may be used at either ceremony.)

The aruvē of the husband's sib: nindi:tш.
'They have stood.'

Aruvē of the woman's sib: a:nak(a) ikka—[woman's sib-name] okaḍa co:makē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññi—[husband's sib-name] okaḍa apēyyē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññira ba:lш ba:ke bandalli apēyyē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññira a:yisa koru a:yitu: co:makē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññira adrusṭa kēṭad(ш) a:yitu: patш ka:la baddш ba:vēkш ruṇa illata:naṇguṇḍш inda:kaṇe niṇgaḍa pommaka maka: nd(ш) ēṇṇitiñjē co:makē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññina poṇṇш kēṭate:ṇgi ta:mane:[1] ndш bayyakш ka:kiaṇḍш po:luva:.

'If so, after the child called Co:makē of the—sib came to rule the house and in marriage to the child called Apēyyē of the—sib, his life having become short and her luck having become bad, because it was not their destiny having ruled to rule the house for more (lit. ten) years, now according to the saying: "If a woman has fallen into trouble, her father's house (is the place for her)," may we go taking back the child called Co:makē who up to today was said to be a wife among you?'

Aruvē of husband's sib: kш:na:]ш maria:di annano.
'According to the custom of past time.'

Aruvē of woman's sib: a:naka co:makē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññi apēyyē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññira ba:]ш ba:ke bapaka aññu:rш bira: nшra poṭilш a:yira bira:nшra ma:lшna sa:laḍaṇga ba:laḍaṇga terakiaṇḍш bandaːṇḍa uṇḍitш uḍutitш miñjuna:na bayyak(ш) ēḍшtaṇḍш po:luva:.

'If so, what is left over, after her eating meals and wearing the clothes, of all the jewels and clothes worth 1000 pagoda-coins in the box worth 500 pagoda-coins which the child called Co:makē brought with her when she came to rule the house and in marriage to the child called Apēyyē, may we go taking it back?'

Aruvē of husband's sib: kш:na:]ш maria:di annano.
'According to the custom of past time.'

Aruvē of woman's sib: idari sa:kaipaṇa.
'Here! take the witness-money.' He gives three annas to the husband's aruvē.

Aruvē of the husband's sib: ba:tш. a:naka co:mavvē:[2] nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññi apēyyē: nd(ш) ēṇṇuvē kuññira va:]ш ba:ke bandalli co:mavvēṇgш co:dшk(ш) irumbш cuṇḍokш modalш ondшtoṭш nш:ro:]a—[husband's sib-name] okaḍa manolш sammanda koḍшpaka—[husband's sib-name] okaḍa manolш co:mavvēṇg(ш) iñjē sammandatuna kovvañji niṇga tandē pannandaci ponn(ш) idari. beci tapa.

'I have received them (lit. it came). If so, here! take the eleven gold coins which you gave on taking sib-rights which were Co:mavvē's in the house of the—sib when we gave to Co:mavvē rights in the house of the—sib to (all things, even to) the iron for making needles, among the articles

[1] The proverb has a second sentence: a:ṇш kēṭate:ṇgi aramane 'if a man gets into trouble, prison (lit. the palace; sc. is the place for him).'

[2] The husband's party use the name that the woman had in his house, with the -avvē termination, while the woman's party have been using the form suitable to an unmarried girl, by which she was known to them before her marriage.

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2: Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
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even as small as the cuṇḍe-fruit, all from one to one hundred, after the child called Co:mavvē came to rule the house and in marriage to the child called Apāyyē. We will give (the coins).' With these words he hands over eleven pebbles.

Aruvē of woman's sib: ba:tu.

'I have received them (lit. they came).'

Aruvē of husband's sib: idari sa:kṣipaṇa.

'Here! take the witness-money.' He gives three annas to the woman's aruvē.

Aruvē of woman's sib: ba:tu.

'I have received them.'

After this ceremony the woman is taken with her belongings to her father's house.

If she should be leaving her husband by divorce, much the same formulas are used, the main difference being in giving the reason for her leaving.

APPENDIX II.

Coorg kinship terminology.

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The kinship system is of the type known as the Dakota-Iroquois system. A summary of the Coorg system follows:

1. There is no self-reciprocating terminology. In Ego's generation his siblings and classificatory parallel cousins on the one hand and his classificatory cross-cousins on the other are indicated by terms which denote age older than himself and younger than himself respectively. Consequently, none of the terms used within Ego's generation are self-reciprocals.

2. No term is found denoting an individual whose sex is unspecified. Collectives which class the sexes together are found in three cases (see U, Y, and Z in Table 2).

3. Siblings and classificatory parallel cousins are classed together in each generation.

4. In Ego's generation a dichotomy is made in classification on the basis of age elder or younger than himself (see 1). In the first ascending generation, Ego's father's male siblings and parallel cousins are permissively dichotomized on the basis of age elder or younger than the father's, and Ego's mother's female siblings and parallel cousins are permissively dichotomized on the basis of age elder or younger than the mother's.

5. The father is distinguished from his brothers, and the mother from her sisters.

6. Ego's generation and the first ascending and descending generations show a use of terms perfectly in accord with a strict system of cross-cousin marriage. Further, no terminological distinction is made between siblings and classificatory parallel cousins of any degree of remoteness, or between classificatory cross-cousins of any degree of remoteness. Consequently, in the first ascending generation there is a separate term (G) for the father's sisters and parallel female cousins, and this is used also for the mother's female cross-cousins and her male siblings' and parallel male cousins' wives. Similarly, there is a separate term (J) for the mother's brothers and parallel male cousins, and this is used also for the father's male cross-cousins and his female siblings' and parallel female cousins' husbands. In Ego's generation the classification of cross-cousin applies to all the children of those in the first ascending generation who are classed according to the preceding two sentences. In the first descending generation a distinction is made between two groups, (a) the children of one's siblings or parallel cousins of the same sex as oneself and of one's cross-cousins of the opposite sex from oneself (these are classed with Ego's

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A Coorg Temple (Kaymada)

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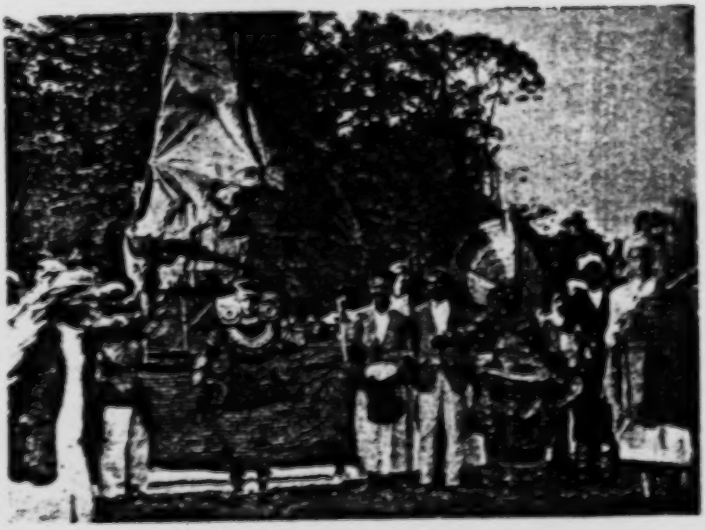

A Ghost Mask (Karnakola)

[facing p. 51]

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

The Coorgs perform another ceremony called ghost-mask (*karanakola*) with the object of finding out the particular wishes of the ghosts. It is performed every second or third year and occasionally also every year. For this, the services of a Malayali performer, a Panikkan or Benna, are requisitioned. At night he puts on, one after the other, five or more different costumes to represent the number of ancestors especially remembered at the time. Arrayed in these different costumes, he dances to the accompaniment of a drum beaten by his companions and behaves as if he were possessed by the Coorg ghosts. After each kola or mask, he leaves the house with a fowl, a coconut, fried rice and other eatables, and some arrack, and offers them in the courtyard to a particular ghost. Various questions are put to him by the members of the family and by the neighbours while he is in a state of trance. The food given him during the trance is called *Karana Barani*. The masks having been finished, a pig especially fattened for the purpose is decapitated in front of the *Kaimatta* and then taken up to be given to the performer. The rest of the carcase and bodies of the fowls decapitated are taken to the house. In the absence of a *Kaimatta*, the pig offering takes place at the *Karanakotta*. Women also behave likewise, when possessed by an ancestral spirit. While thus affected, they roll on the ground, but they do not give utterance to oracular responses. Sometimes sorcerers, Coorgs or aliens, are invited to exorcise the ghosts. With the recitations of certain formulae in loud voices, they resort to flagellation. If it proves ineffectual, offerings are given.

Village Gods

Tradition has it that human sacrifices were offered in former times to secure the blessings of Grama Devatas, Mariamma, Durga, and Bhadrakali, who are supposed to protect the villages or nads from all evil influences. These deities have their annual feasts among the Coorgs, but they pay special attention to Ajappa, Kaliat Ajappa, and Kuttamma in Kiggatnad, whose shrine is annually visited with gifts.

Every forest ground has its presiding deity to which an annual sacrifice of pork and cakes is offered. If it is not propitiated, the *Kadevaru*, the tending god, will withdraw his favour, and sickness and death among cattle will ensue. Besides, there are extensive forests called Devarukadu, which are untrodden by human foot and reserved for the abodes or hunting grounds of deified heroic ancestors.

Serpent Worship

Traces of serpent worship or tree worship are found in Coorg. The *Natas* or spots on which cobras have finished their course of terrestrial life are the place of solemn ceremonies. To prevent any human being from setting foot on the hallowed spot, it is marked by a little stone enclosure.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

During the month of November, a lamp is lighted every evening to Natas, and coconuts are offered as oblations.

Pilgrimage

The Coorgs go on pilgrimage to Irpatre at the foot of Lakshmana-tirtha fall in Kiladnad after the Sivaratri in February or March, and on the Talai Kaveri Jatra to the source of the river Cauvery in October. Amongst the Jatra beyond their country, those visited by the Coorgs are four, Subramania on the northern frontier of Coorg in December, Baitur in Malabar, in February, and Nanjangudu in Mysore which comes off in December. In exceptional cases they go to Benares.

Demon Worship

The Coorgs are demon worshippers because of the evil influences of certain malignant spirits, which can render their life more gloomy and wretched. The demons are called Kulis, who are believed to be capable of carrying away the souls of the dying members in a family. When any trouble arises in a house, and strange voices are believed to be heard in or near it, a *Kanya* (a Malabar astrologer) is consulted as to the cause of it, and he speaks of the influence of some *Kuli* who must have carried away the soul of somebody either in the house or in the neighbourhood. He suggests that a demon mask has to be performed for the liberation of the soul. It takes place once a year at Kutta, or at any other place once in two or three years.

The master of the house ties some money in a piece of cloth which is suspended from a rafter of the house as a pledge for the performance of the ceremony. Sometimes he ties his brass plate up there and eats his food on a plantain leaf as a vow. For the demon mask, either a Malayali magician or a true Ajjala Palya is sent for, and the ceremony is performed in the courtyard of the house owner. Demon masks are performed in the name of one or two of the five demons, Bhamundi, Kalluguttl, Panjurli, Gulika and Goraka. The details of the ceremony are the same as those described for the exorcism of the ancestral spirits. The food of the performer in trance is called Kuli Barani. The liberation of the soul is thus effected. The demon that has thus committed the theft begs to leave the soul free. In the event of his refusal, the performer throws a handful of rice on the member of the house standing near him, and thus transfers the spirit to him. The spirit alights on his back, when he falls in a swoon, and is soon carried away by others into the house. The final act of a demon mark is the decapitation of pigs in front of the so called *kushikoos* or demon abode. It may be near to or far away from the house or village. Fowls are sacrificed upon it. One pig suffices for house affair, but several pigs are required when a whole village is involved. The heads are given to the performers, and the trunks supply the house or village diviner.

Festivals: (1) Huttari

243 746 527 The Huttari is the feast of first fruits. The name is said to be derived from the Malayalam 'pudiyari', or new rice. It occurs at full moon at the end of November or beginning of December. After various preliminary ceremonies, the person chosen to cut the first sheaves goes at sunset to the fields in procession with a lighted torch in a dish of rice [415] carried before him. He has a sickle in one hand and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. He cuts the sheaf and distributes the stalk to those present, and puts some into the milk. This is carried in procession to the [534] house, the people shouting, "Poli, poli, Deva", that is, "Increase, increase, O God," followed by a blast of the shrill Coorg brass horn. It is truly a national and thanksgiving feast entirely uninfluenced by Brahmanism. It [535] lasts for seven days. It begins with village rejoicings and extends to Nad [533] or district gatherings, and ends every day with the peculiar cane dance of [526] the men and boys to the tune of the most melancholy and monotonous sound of horns, drums and songs. Other games vary the proceedings, but the most interesting part is always the champion fight in playful dance, which often ends in a general skirmish in which the canes are freely used.

(2) Kaylmurtha

527 The Kaylmurtha is the festival of arms celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg sometime in August. When the hard labours of ploughing, sowing, and transplanting of rice are over, a break in the monsoon spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and [711] dales, forests and fields of Coorg, when a holiday is most welcome. The Takka of the grama calls some respectable men to accompany him to the astrologer's home. They ascertain the most propitious day for the celebration of the festival.

[410] On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is placed in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When this is done, they are carried to a room or central hall, where they are [782] placed in a corner. When the auspicious moment arrives incense is burnt before the weapons, sandal paste is dotted on them in profusion, and a show offering, *Nivedya*, is offered to them and the idols. As soon as the [526] festival is over, the whole house sits down to dinner. The men then proceed with their arms to the village green, *uru-mandu*, to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark and in athletic sports. The following day is devoted to a hunt in the forest belonging to the village. This is followed by a great hunt of the whole Nadu. It is a repetition of the village hunt on a larger scale. [533] Whatever game is obtained, the man who killed the animal receives a hind quarter and the head. The rest goes to the company. The Kaylmurtha is the most glorious of all festivities to the young Coorgs,

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and the popular song of the Coorg mountaineer does full justice to this sentiment. 52 533

(3) Bhagavathi Feast

The Bhagavathi feast has been introduced by the Tulu Brahmins. 796 ● It takes place two months preceding the monsoon. It is connected with [177] demoniacal possessions, and extends over nine days. Tantri Brahmins, [787] Coorgs and Holeyas have their share in the feast, and votaries disport [782] themselves in their orgies in as noisy a manner as the Ajjala Palyas. The chief object of the feast is the collection of votive offerings to Tantri Brahmins who are an object of dread to the Coorgs.

(4) Devasthana

The Coorg Devasthanas are rude village shrines of mud walls and 346 thatched roof within a gloomy grove. The only ones deserving notice are those at Bhagamandala, Palur, Irupu and Omkareswara Devasthana at Mercara, the latter of which is built in the same Moorish style as the Rajas' tombs.

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Tree Worship

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Hattari Festival

[Facing p. 64]

[P 64]

CHAPTER XI

AMMA COORG

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[162] THE Amma Coorgs belong to the indigenous priesthood of Coorg. They
[776] numbered 666 in the Census of 1931, 336 being males and 330 females. Their common name is Amma Kodagas, which would naturally signify Coorgs devoted to the worship of Amma or the goddess of the chief river of the
173 country, the Cauvery. The Brahmans invented a mythical origin which is not in accord with the Cauvery Purana.

As reward for his austerities the sage Kavera was blessed with a daughter, Kaveri, who was proposed to be given in marriage to Agastya, another sage who resided on the Brahmagiri. Kaveri did not accept the proposal. She assumed the shape of a river and fled from the mountain. Agastya in hot pursuit overtook her at Kadianad and persuaded her to submit their dispute to the arbitration of their friends. They called three families of Amma Kodagas and six of Coorgs. The former sided with Agastya and the latter with Kaveri. The Amma Kodagas decided that Kaveri should not be allowed to go. The Coorgs said that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. This provoked Agastya, who pronounced a curse that the generation of Coorgs should become less, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow, and that their cows should not give milk. But Kaveri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could, and said, "The Coorgs shall increase, but the Amma Coorgs decrease, the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted, the cows shall be milked after the calves have drunk". So saying, she tried to escape and on being held by Agastya by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed
[778] rapidly away. Hence the place where this occurred is called Balamuri (turn-
[788] ing to the right). A linga was erected at the spot by the Brahmans. It is
485 yearly visited in the month of *November* at the time of the Kaveri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda Vira Rajendrar built here a rest-house, which, though built a century ago, is in tolerable preservation. Nothing more is known about the real history of the Amma Coorgs,
174 but a few facts may be given as evidence that they are the remains of an
793 ancient priesthood.

101 The Amma Coorgs observe in common with the Coorgs the great fes-
793 tivals of the country, and act as priests. They dress like Coorgs and at the
[796] same time wear the holy thread. It seems that they inclined towards the

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professed patronage of the Brahmans and that they gradually dropped into brahmanical habits of life and thought. A good many now wear the holy thread, and all profess to abstain from meat and fermented liquors. The return to Brahman initiation and dress was brought about by a Haviga Brahman whose family exercised spiritual influence over the Amma Kodagas. They are still unlettered. There is a tradition current among them that in former times one half of Coorg belonged to the Ammas, and the rest to the Coorgs. The Ammas by virtue of their priesthood held their land free of rent. Their lands are even now very lightly taxed.

Internal Structure

The Amma Coorgs form a homogeneous community. There are two gotras among them, the Baradwaja gotra and Viswamitra gotra. They marry within the same gotra.

Marriage Customs and Ceremonies

The Amma Coorgs do not intermarry with the Coorgs, but the separation may be of recent origin. Marriage settlement is made only after the agreement of horoscopes. The young man's father, uncle, and other close relations assemble, when coconuts, plantains, and betel leaves are handed to the bride in token of settlement. The auspicious day for celebration is fixed to send invitations to the relatives on both sides. The dress and ornaments to be given to the bride are also settled. The preliminary formalities that are gone through are :—

1. The boy's party going to the house of the bride.
2. Their welcome with refreshments.
3. Nischithambulam.

The essential formalities are *mukadarsana*, and garlanding and *panigrahana*, tali-tying, presenting the bride with the wedding dress and ornaments, and feasting. There is no *homam* as among the Coorgs, but there exists the cutting of plantains in common with the Coorgs. On the arrival of the bride at the bridegroom's house, she puts rice on the lamp. On the third day they bathe, and celebrate the *sobhanaprasta*, if the girl has attained puberty already.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

When a girl becomes pregnant, *pumsavana* and *simantha* are performed. When she is about to become a mother, she is confined to a separate room. Her mother or some aged woman acts as midwife. Pollution lasts for eleven days after which she bathes to become pure. But it is only after 40 days that ganga puja is performed, when she bathes and becomes pure. Only then can she enter the kitchen. Cradling the baby takes place on the eleventh day. The naming ceremony takes place the same day.

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Thou hast built the solid gate,
And the courts around the house.
Oh! my father; yesterday
Fallen on the bed of sickness,
And to-day before the feet
Of the Lord of earth and heaven,
And tomorrow, like the sun
Setting in the cloudy sky,
Thou shalt sink into the grave.
Woe! my father, thou art gone!
Woe! my father, gone for ever!

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4. POPULAR FESTIVALS OF THE COORGS.

The festivals of the Coorgs are not numerous. A weekly day of rest is recognised as little by the Coorgs as by other Hindus.

The two great annual festivals take place in quick succession towards the end of the year. The *Kávéri-feast* in Tulámása i. e. the time of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra in October, and the *Huttari* or Harvest-feast in November or December.

Before the monsoon in April and may the *Bhagavati-festival* is observed all over Coorg and in August, generally at the first break of the monsoon, the *Keilmurta* or festival of arms, is celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg.

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a. The Kávéri-feast.

About the middle of October all Coorg prepares for the grand festival of Kávéri. The sun has gained the ascendency over the monsoon clouds. A few passing showers only may still be expected. The rice valleys are clothed with rich paddy approaching maturity; the forests and grass hills resplendent with the freshness and beauty of spring. Every Coorg house sends one or two representatives to Tala-Kávéri. Also pil-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

grims from Malayálam, Tulu and Mysore repair to the sacred place by thousands. Distinguished amongst these are the Brahmini-widows—those sad figures, clothed with reddish brown garments, one end of which covers the shorn head. A bundle under one arm they trudge along, supported by a stick; perhaps they come by their own impulse, perhaps in the name and for the benefit of some sick relation. The nearer the pilgrims approach the end of their journey, the more frequent and the more numerous are the festive caravans of men, women and children in holiday-costume, who now rest in picturesque groups on the shady banks of streams, now proceed in gay defiles over the grassy hills. With the last ascent of a small elevation near the foot of the Tala-Káveri-hill the view of the upper basin of the Káveri valley, which is rather wide and flanked by steep hills, suddenly bursts upon us. The Bhágamandala temple with its copper roof is conspicuous in the middle of the valley and close to the Káveri. A few rows of houses near it are changed into a busy mart. Thousands of people move to and fro, and the humming noise of the multitude sounds like the distant surf of the ocean. Hundreds are engaged in bathing in the sacred stream before they enter the temple, which forms a large square with an open centre like a Coorg house. Along the road pedlars are squatted behind their paltry wares which are spread under a flimsy awning. Mendicant Sanyásis with hollow sounding conch and brass gong in hand push, blowing and ringing, through the crowd. Hourly the multitude increases; new arrivals descend from all the neighbouring mountain pathways into the valley. Hundreds of people have already proceeded to reach the Káveri source, in order to build for themselves and their expected friends sheltering booths against the cold damp night air. A pathway leads over paddy-fields through steep jungle and over rocky mountain ridges to the sacred spot. As they ascend, they shout "Náráyana, Oh!

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Náráyana and the echo is taken up by succeeding caravans. Near the summit there is an overhanging rock, called Bíma-kallu, which forms a sheltering abode for some fakirs during the festive season. The source of the river is enclosed by a stone basin, over which a small shrine of granite slabs is built. From this reservoir the pure water percolates into a tank of about 30 feet square, which by an outlet keeps the water to a level of 2½ feet. On two sides there are rough stone terraces scooped out of the hill side and above the third terrace on a dip of the hill there is a small square temple dedicated to Ganapati with a few huts close by for the abode of the residing Brahmin-pújáris.

At the moment, fixed by the Astrologer, of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra, whether by day or by night, the pilgrim, who is anxious to experience the full power of the sin cleansing bath, must descend into the holy tank. With the approach of the hour an ever increasing multitude surrounds the tank, impatiently waiting for the propitious moment. Now the priest gives the sign and the living throng, old and young, men and women rush in wild confusion into the water, duck three times and drink as often of the water, and, on emerging, offer a small gift to the priests, who sit near the shrine, receive the money and pour some pure water over the devotee's head. Before leaving, most of the pilgrims fill a hollow reed (Wóte) with water from the sacred spring and carry it home for the benefit of their relatives, and for purifying their wells. The effectual bathing season lasts for a whole month but with decreasing virtue. From 8 to 15,000 pilgrims may annually visit Tala-Káwéri, but the interest in the place seems to be on the decrease. The presiding Brahmins have secured some jungle for coffee cultivation in the neighbourhood of the temple, and the Coorgs complain, that the priests take greater care of their coffee gardens than of

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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their religious duties, and only lately some valuable portions of the Tala-Kávéri shrine were stolen!

The Kávéri-day is celebrated also in the Coorg houses by those who remain at home, and is considered as a high holiday.

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Before sunrise, the mistress of the house early leaves her bed, goes to the cooking-room, takes a brass-dish, throws into it a handful of rice, and having spread it over the whole plate, puts a common lamp, which has been in daily use, into the centre. The burning lamp is surrounded with flowers gathered from a garden or the jungle. To these a fresh, young cucumber is added. Then a red handkerchief is placed behind the lamp. Upon the handkerchief one jewel of gold or silver is laid. The mistress perhaps takes the necklace from her own person on the occasion, which is considered the luckiest choice. Then a good mat is spread on the ground, and a tripod, which [352] serves the Coorgs for a dinner-table, placed upon the mat. Upon the tripod the woman sets the brass-plate with the rice, lamp, cloth and jewel. This done, she proceeds to bake little [252] cakes from a dough of rice-flour and plantains, well kneaded together on the preceding night, upon a stone-mould well heated. Three of these little cakes are added to the contents of the plate. Then she calls the inmates of the house. They all rise instantly, go straight into the kitchen, and fold their hands before the tripod, as in adoration. One of the men takes three or five of the fresh cakes and carries them down to the rice-fields. There he puts the cakes upon one of the bamboo sticks, which have been placed in every field on the preceding day, crowned with a bundle of Keibala creepers. The field next to the house is chosen for this offering. When the cakes are duly laid upon the top of the creeper-crowned pole, the man gives three great shouts and returns to the house. It is now about five o'clock. (The cakes are afterwards gathered by the Holeyas, who live in the neighbour-

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hood.) On the return of the man from the field, the whole family sit down in the kitchen and eat the cakes prepared by the mistress and the other females after their morning entrance into the cooking and dining-room. When the cakes are consumed, the ceremony of the Kávéri-day is over. In houses, where some one knows how to read, he takes the Góvina-pada book and recites *the Song of the Cow*, the rest of the family listening. The day is kept as a holiday; nobody is expected to work. But there is no further ceremony.

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The substance of the lay of the cow is as follows:—One great herd of cattle was grazing in the forest, when a royal tiger appeared and in a few moments by three or four leaps threw himself into the midst of the poor, peaceful animals. The whole herd, affrighted, ran off in wild despair in all directions. One cow only stood still, and was seized by the savage beast. The cow, however, made bold to speak to her destroyer, and said: "You will kill and devour me. Do it. But give me a few moments' leave to go after my poor calf, to let it drink for the last time, and to commit it to the care of kind friends, before I die." The tiger, astonished and moved by the speech of his victim, causes the cow to swear, that, after performing her last duty, she will return and deliver herself to her hungry master. She swears and goes to seek her calf. Having found it, she gives it to drink, and then commits it to the care of her friends, entreating them to allow it to share their milk with their own calves, not to kick, when it comes from behind to drink, nor to turn their horns against it, when it comes in front. Having sworn, she would rather die, than break her word, she returns to the tiger, and begs his pardon for having detained him so long and increased his hunger. But the tiger in the presence of such truth and goodness, is seized with remorse. His heinous sins rise to his mind in dreadful array. The slayer of a thousand cows sinks under the burden of his wickedness.

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"If I killed this pattern of righteousness, my sins could never be forgiven," he says to himself. He declares to the cow, that she may return in safety to her calf and her herd, takes a desperate leap high into the air, and falls down dead before the good cow. This is the Coorg lay of the cow, consisting of one hundred and odd verses.

796 539

b. The Huttari-feast.

The Huttari-feast is held in honor of the annual rice-harvest. The name is derived from the Malayálam Pudi-ari, new rice, and by the rules of Coorg grammar transformed into Huttari. The festival occurs in the month of Scorpio which succeeds Libra. The day of the Coorg-festival depends upon the day fixed by the Malayálam Astrologers for the celebration of the New-rice-festival in the month of Leo. The Malayálam festival takes place two months before that of Coorg, because the rice on the coast ripens two months earlier. If the Malayálam festival of the First-fruits fall upon the first day of the Simha-mása, that of Coorg is held on the first day of Vrishchika-mása; if the Malayálam festival be on the second day of that month, the Coorg holidays commence on the second day of this month, and so on. (Simha-mása corresponds to our September—October, Vrishchika-mása to our November—December.)

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The Huttari is the great national festival of the Coorgs and of the Holeyas. It is a heathenish Christmas season, a sort of Saturnalia. The real holidays are only seven in number, but both Coorgs and Holeyas, who stand in an ancient and intimate relation to each other, generally add two or three more days of feasting and merry-making to the great week. On this occasion, as well as on the great Kávéri-day, Brahmins are in no way wanted. Nor could they well officiate in a Coorg kitchen on the Kávéri-day, or preside over the pork-and-brandy-feasts in the merry days of Huttari.

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796 And it appears, that the people can do very well without them.

796 361 Six days before the chief festival of tasting the new rice, all the males from six to sixty years, assemble on one of the Mandus of the Gráma, after sunset. Mandu is the name of the open public place in which business is transacted or festive games carried on. Grámas have generally three Mandus, one called the Punchâyati-mandu for business; a second, Dévara-mandu, on which dances are performed in the name of Bhagavati during the after-Huttari-days; a third, Uru-mandu (i. e. the Mandu of the village) on which the Huttari performances take place.

796 The time of these national games and dances is from sunset till after ten o'clock. The whole male population of the Gráma, except little boys and old men, past sixty, has religiously to attend. The assembly gathers gradually between six and seven o'clock. When the assembly is full, a space is marked out for the performances of the party. At a little [563] distance a band of musicians, two Holeya horn-blowers and [534] two Méda-drummers, sit near a fire, which they have kindled for warming themselves and their instruments. The horns are large and of brass. The drums are a Pare (large drum) and a Kudike-pare (pot-drum of a smaller size).

Three Coorg-men step into the centre of the open space and call aloud three names: Ayappa! Mahádéva! Bhagavati! The men stand in a triangle, their faces towards the centre, [796] their backs towards the company. Ayappa is the Coorg forest-god; Mahádéva, the Shiva of the Hindus, and Bhagavati, his wife.

796 526 The Chandukutti (ball-and-peg-play) now follows. The whole assembly takes part in it, the moon shedding a bright silver-light on the scene. A peg is driven into the centre of the chosen ground. A piece of rope is fastened to it by a loose loop. The people who make this preparation, seize some

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one, who must hold this rope. A piece of wood, generally of a creeper called Odi, is cut into seven parts, which are called Chandu, i. e. balls. The man holding the rope puts six of these balls in a circle round the peg at a distance of the rope's length, the seventh is deposited close by the peg. The whole company now endeavours to pick off the balls without being touched by their guardian. The player in the centre, always keeping the rope's end in one hand, turns round and round, and tries to touch some one of the aggressors. If he succeed, the person touched must take his place and the play recommences. When six balls are abstracted, the seventh must be moved to the distance of one foot from the peg. When this also is lost, the man has to run through the whole crowd and escape, without being caught, to the Musicians' place. If he reach this asylum in safety, the play is won and finished. If he be caught on his way, he is brought before the Nettle-man, an officer of the play-court, who has been waiting all the time, a long Angare-stick—a large fierce nettle—in his hand, for the victim. His hands and feet are well touched and the play ends. Now the assembly perform different kinds of plays and dances, representing the wars which in ancient times appear to have been waged between people of different districts. A man is wounded; a physician is called, who prescribes for him. Another wounded man dies, and Holeyas are called to invite his friends to the funeral. A scene of demoniacal possession is acted. The funeral is performed. Now stories are told of incredibilities. "I saw the other day a little hare attacking a tiger and breaking its neck." Reply: "Did you? I saw a buffaloe flying over the mountains," etc. Three men invoke again Ayappa, Mahádéva and Bhagavati. Dances follow, accompanied by the beating of sticks keeping time with the music of the band outside. Feats of gymnastic strength and agility follow, and another invocation of the three deities concludes the performance.

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796 [824] formance. The Huttari takes place on the full moon. Early in the morning before dawn, a quantity of Ashvatha (ficus religiosa), Kumbali and Keku (wild trees) leaves, some hundred of each for great houses, together with a piece of a creeper, called Inyoli, and some fibrous bark called Achchi, are collected and deposited in a shady place for the use of the evening. [356] During the day, the house is cleansed, brass vessels are scoured, and every thing wears the appearance of a great holiday. Beggars come and are dismissed with presents. [563] The Méda brings the Huttari basket, the potter the little Huttari pot, the blacksmith a new sickle, the carpenter a new spoon, the Holeya a new mat. Each carries off his Huttari [787] portion of rice and plantains. The astrologer follows, to communicate the exact time of the full moon, and claims his share of the Huttari bounty. The cattle are washed and scrubbed, for once; the menial servants have an extra allowance of rice; breakfast and dinner are served to the family. [515] At sunset the whole house prepares for a hot bath. The precedence is given to the person whom the astrologer has chosen in the morning for the ceremony of cutting the first sheaves. On his return from bathing, he repairs to the threshing floor, spreads the Huttari mat, and, while the rest are engaged in their ablutions, cuts the Inyoli creeper into small pieces, rolls each piece into an Ashvatha, a Kumbali and a Keku leaf, in the fashion of a native cherroot, and ties up the little bundle with a bit of Achchi fibre. All the bundles are placed in the Huttari basket. Now the women take a large dish, strew it with rice, and place a lighted lamp in it. This done, the whole household march towards the fields; the dish with the lamp is carried in front; the sheaf-cutter follows with basket and sickle in one hand, and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. Arrived at the chosen spot, the young man binds one of the leaf scrolls from his basket to a bush of rice, and pours milk into it. He cuts

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an armful of rice in the neighbourhood and distributes two or three stalks to every one present. Some stalks are put into the milk-vessel. No one must touch the sheaf-cutter. All return to the threshing floor shouting as they walk on: "Poly, poly, Déva!" (increase, O God!) A bundle of leaves is adorned with a stalk of rice, and fastened to the post in the centre of the threshing floor. The company proceeds to the door of the house, where the mistress meets them, washes the feet of the sheaf-cutter, and presents to him, and after him to all the rest, a brass-vessel, filled with milk, honey and sugar, from which each takes a draught. They move into the kitchen. The Huttari mat is spread, the brass dish, the rice sheaf, and the basket with leaf scrolls, each with a stalk of rice, are placed on it. The young man distributes the bundles to the members of the family, who disperse to bind them to every thing in house and garden, doors, stools, roof, trees, etc. In the mean time he sits down to knead the Huttari dough of rice meal, plantains, milk and honey, seven new rice corns, seven pieces of cocoanut, seven small pebbles, seven pieces of dry ginger, seven cardamom seeds, and seven corns of sesamum are added. Every one receives a little of this dough upon an Ashvatha leaf, and eats it. The ceremony is over, and the sheaf-cutter mixes with the company. Supper follows, consisting of sugared rice and sweet potatoes, into which a handful of new rice is thrown, and of a substantial common repast of rice and curry. The Huttari chants follow now at every house during the night.

But the Coorgs have not yet done altogether, with their pleasant festival. Four after-Huttari-days are added to the holy week. On the eighth day the Urukólu, the village-stick-dance, collects the whole community. The women of two or three houses repair together to the Urumandu, a pair leading and a second pair following, all four beating cymbals and chanting ancient songs or impromptu verses. When

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796 when they have arrived at the place of meeting, they sit down in [535] groups with the children, and look at the dances performed by the men, who go through the evolutions of Coorg saltation, beating small rattans, of which they carry one in each hand, while they move to the time of a music, which proceeds from a group of Holeyas, stationed between the assembly of the Coorgs and that of their own people, who enjoy themselves, in the same fashion as their masters, at a little distance.

[536] Theatrical performances are added. Brahmans, Moplas, Vòddas (tank diggers from Orissa), Gadikas (snake dancers), Jógis (represented by little boys), play through the village.

796 After dinner, on the ninth day, the Nádukólu begins. 526 This is an assembly of the whole district. Every thing is [634] done as at the Urukólu, only on a larger scale. At these [535] assemblies, while the monotonous music plays and the large circle of dancers moves in the measured stick-dance, a couple of men from different grámas and armed with a small shield and a long rattan, step from opposite sides into the ring with a shout of defiance and keeping time with the music, they approach and evade each other, swinging their rattans and dealing blows, aimed at the legs and with their shield warding them off, but often the players get so excited, that their single stick sham combat ends in a mutual severe flogging, 796 which has to be stopped by the spectators. At five the parties from the different villages separate and go home.

[535] In the afternoon of the tenth day, the Dévarakólu (stick-[574] dance in honor of Bhagavati) takes place in every village. The entertainment is the same as on the two preceding days. Dinners are held at different houses of appointment, and terminate on the 11th day with a large public dinner that is given, on some open plain in the forest when the musicians, barda, drummers, Holeyas and Médas unite their exertions to give eclat to the festivity.

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c. **The Bhagavati-feast.**

Of the two lesser annual festivals one, the Bhagavati-feast, has been introduced by Tulu Brahmans, or, if it was originally a Coorg observance, has been thoroughly brahmanized.

It takes place during the two months preceding the monsoon. Different localities differ in the time of its celebration. Two or three villages have one Bhagavati temple in common, and support it jointly. These temples are in charge of Brahmans entirely. Tulu Brahmans hold the livings; with them some Padárthis, a lower class of Brahmans, who wear no holy string, are associated as musicians to Bhagavati. The whole establishment is under the management of some Tantri-Brahmans in the Tulu country, who come every eighth or tenth year, to consecrate idols and to collect money. On these occasions large sums are offered by the superstitious. The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say, that if one of the Tantri-Brahmans be offended and curse a man, he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of these masters of the black art, to say to a man: "do you not see?" or "do you not hear?" and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or deafness, or even death. Strange! It would appear, that the common worship of the great gods of the country was less degrading to the mind, and engendered a more cheerful kind of superstition, than this wild sort of idolatry, which has enslaved the poor Coorgs. The Tantrics, on one of their visits, will gather some two or three hundred rupees from the money-loving Coorgs. Sometimes an idol of Bhagavati has lost its power, when they re-enliven it. Or the officiating Brahman, who has played the possessed on festival days, has died. The Tantri has to appoint his successor. These services are not performed gratuitously; the presiding Tantri receives every year one half of the profits of the establishment, through a curate whom he leaves in charge.

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796 793 787 Some Coorg also is chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a small number of candidates presented by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some mantra and puts holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.

346 793 794 Every house of the villages, connected with a temple, must pay an assessment in rice every year to the Brahmans employed, and money must be offered by every family, from 3 as. to one rupee, on the last day of the annual festival.

796 793 The Bhagavati-feast lasts nine days. During the first six days, every morning and evening, the idol is carried three times round the temple in procession, while the Tantri-curate, who is the chief authority in the place, performs púja, strewing rice and minced leaves of Calyptanthes Caryophyllifolia, mixed together, on the stones placed towards the eight regions of the heavens, and mumbling his mantras. One of the Tulu Brahmans carries the idol on his head; he is accompanied by the Púját and the other officers of the shrine, followed by the band of Padárthis, playing the drum, cymbal and gong, and preceded by the Coorg-man performing a frantic dance in the ecstasy of demoniac possession. Many people come on these occasions to put questions to Bhagavati in behalf of sick persons, or for the discovery of thieves, etc. which are duly answered by the Coorg spokesman of the goddess.

[786] [787]

796 786 [793] On the evening of the sixth day things take a more excited aspect. Now the Brahman idol-carrier also is seized with the strange inspiration. He dances and trembles, and answers questions by making signs only. On the same afternoon a crowd of Holeyas, who have finished the Pannangalamma-feast (a corresponding Holeya festival) come to the

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open space before the temple, many of them possessed by devils of their own, which belong to the host of Pannangalamma, all of them jumping and dancing and beating their drums and gongs in the most approved fashion. Every one of them, man, woman and child, carries a long dry bamboo-stick. These bamboos are piled up in front of the temple, like soldiers' muskets, and set fire to at night, when the Holeyas dance round the flames until the pile breaks and falls to the ground. (If the pile fall towards the east, it is considered a lucky omen.) While these things take place outside, the temple-yard resounds with the voices of Coorgs, singing hymns in honor of Bhagavati, and the wild notes of many drums, through which the shrill words of the demoniac Coorg now and then pierce—a dismal scene!

On the seventh day, after the morning circumambulation of the temple, votive offerings are brought by the villagers of the parish. In each village the people collect at the house of some one, who has vowed a bullock-load of rice or cocoanuts, and take their breakfast. After breakfast, the whole company proceeds with the offering to the temple, singing and making music. The gift having been presented to the priest, the party returns to the village, to carry another contribution to the temple in the same manner. Thus the forenoon is spent. Then the young men dance for some hours. Music heightens the joy of the entertainments, and all the rest of the community, women, girls, children and old men, sit round the temple-yard—admiring spectators. At four o'clock the idol is taken out and carried round the shrine, the whole assembly joining in the procession. The Brahman-carrier of Bhagavati is possessed by the goddess. He stretches out his hand during the strange dance, which he performs with the idol upon his head. Whoever can, puts some money into his open hand. He, conscious enough in this respect, casts every

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796 [782] piece given to him into a copper vessel, held by the Tantri. With the setting sun the business of the day is concluded.

The morning of the eighth day is devoted to the delivery of votive presents, as on the preceding day. At ten o'clock [535] dances are performed by the young men, as on the seventh day. This continues till two o'clock, when all the good shots 796 assemble for shooting at a mark. A cocoanut is hung up in 526 some tree between two plantain-bunch-tops as a mark. He who hits the nut, is rewarded with a present of three annas and the honor of the name of a good marksman. Then one of the Takkas, or the Coorg-dancer before Bhagavati, distributes a number of cocoanuts (of which there is an abundance, as every family must bring one or two) to the young men. One seizes a nut between his hands, others try to take it out of his grasp. In a few moments the whole ground is filled 796 with parties struggling for cocoanuts. He who succeeds in forcing the nut out of the hands of the original possessor, [788] carries it away as his prize. At three o'clock the idol-procession takes place again, after which all the men go with the idol to the river or the tank, to bathe the goddess and themselves.

Ninth day. From each house one person appears at the temple, bearing the yearly money-contribution, which is deli- [794] vered to the Takkas. The collection being made, the salaries of the temple-officers and servants of the temple are paid. [574] Then the Brahmans give a good, undefiled dinner of pure vegetable dishes, to their Coorg supporters, first, of course, eating themselves, and leaving the rest to their friends. This temple dinner is the last act in the Bhagavati festival.

527 **d. The Keilmûrta festival.**

The Keilmûrta festival is a very different affair, altogether [787] a Coorg business. Early in the month of Leo (July—August) the Takka of the gráma calls some respectable men to

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wife) is worshipped once a year, when pigs are sacrificed.— This is, of course, an abomination to the Brahmans.

b. Ancestral and Demon worship.

The principal place in Coorg-idolatry is held by the worship of the dead. Every family offers a sacrifice to its departed ancestors once a year, during the two months preceding the monsoon. A fowl, generally a cock, is killed, upon a stone devoted to the Káranas, somewhere in the jungle-land belonging to the family estate. (Kárana is the name given to the heads of families whether living or dead.) Seven of the Arméri houses, however, have little temples where *Kóla* or *Bárani* is annually performed. Kóla is the name of a sacrifice connected with demoniacal dancing, Bárani, of a sacrifice to the dead without the dances. These temples consecrated to the worship of the dead are called *Keimada*. Mada is the Coorg word for Matha, a religious building. The meaning of the word "kei" may possibly stand for Kárana, or simply denote: near, at hand, private. The Púját'is (officiating priests) employed in these ceremonies are Malayálas long since naturalized in Coorg, Panika, Maleya, Banna men, subordinate to the Kanyas, the hereditary Malayálam astrologers of Coorg. At the Kólas they beat drums and sing verses in commemoration of the ancestors. Those who are to be possessed by the spirits, wear masks and buckle on swords. As they sing of the deceased father, or grandfather, or other ancestor, his spirit seizes them and they speak as his mouthpieces. To each spirit a sacrifice is offered, a cock and a bottle of spirits, which his representative drinks, thus fortifying himself for future exertion during the night. The ceremony begins after sunset, in the presence of the whole village-community, and is continued until morning. About seven or eight o'clock in the morning pigs are sacrificed. The head of one of the pigs belongs to the performers, the

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rest is cooked in the house, to which the Keimada is attached, and is consumed by the whole community with a plentiful addition of liquor. At noon the ceremonies are completed. When Bárani only is performed, one of the strange priests does the whole work, but in the Kólas several are engaged. A peculiar kind of illumination is essential to both Kóla and Bárani. Some plantain trees are split into thin strips. These are placed on the ground in three or four layers, crossing at right angles, and forming a kind of network. Twenty-four or forty-eight or ninety-six such strips of split plantain-stems are used. Where they cross one another, spikes of a reed, called Wotté, are driven through them into the ground. At the upper end of these spikes, which are two or three feet high, pieces of cloth are fastened, twisted into wicks and well moistened with oil. When the whole net is thus arranged, two layers of strips are raised, one to near the top of the spikes, the other a foot lower. Between the crossings, plantain-leaf-pieces are placed, upon which quantities of rice, plain and fried, of arecanut, jaggory, etc. are put. When the ceremony begins, a few of the oiled wicks are lighted. At the pig-sacrifice all are kindled, and the whole square blazes up like a table of fire, without however consuming the offerings placed on the leaves, which are the perquisite of the performers.

769 782

Besides, every family has some spot on the estate, in a retired part of the jungle-land, where a sacrifice of a fowl is offered every year to the departed by the living members of the house. No strangers are permitted to attend on these occasions. A stone placed on a rough mound serves as altar.

769 [796]

On the day of *Sivarâtri* a religious ceremony takes place in Mercara at the Rajahs' tombs, that of Dodda-Virájender being transformed into a temple, where the spirit of the hero is worshipped with the honors due to the saint or rather a god, for Virájender has been deified by the Lingaites. On

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when the turn came to a certain house, the devoted victim made his escape into the jungle. The villagers, after an unsuccessful search, returned to the temple and said to the pújári: "Kalak-ádu" which has a double meaning viz. "Kalake," next year—"ádu," we will give, or "ádu", a goat: and thenceforth only scape-goats were offered. The devotees fast during the day. The he-goat is killed in the afternoon, the blood sprinkled upon a stone, and the flesh eaten. At night the Panikas dressed in red and white striped cotton cloths and their faces covered with metal or bark masks perform their demoniacal dances.

In Mercara-táluq in Ippanivólavádi and in Kádakéri in Hálerinád the villagers sacrifice a kóna or male-buffalo instead of a man. Tied to a tree in a gloomy grove near the temple, the beast is killed by a Méda who cuts off its head with a large knife, but no Coorgs are present at the time. The blood is spilled on a stone under a tree and the flesh eaten by the Médas.

In connection with this sacrifice there are peculiar dances performed by the Coorgs around the temple: the *Kombáta* or *horn-dance*, each man wearing the horns of a spotted deer or stag on his head; the *Pilláta* or *peacocks'-feather-dance*, the performers being ornamented with peacocks' feathers, and the *Chauriáta* or *yák-tail-dance*, during which the dancers, keeping time, swing yák tails. These ornaments belong to the temple, where they are kept.

In some cases where a particular curse is said by the Kanya to rest upon a house, stable or field, which can only be removed by an extraordinary sacrifice, the ceremony performed seems to be another relic of human sacrifices. The Kanya sends for some of his fraternity, the Panikas or Bannas, and they set to work. A pit is dug in the middle room of the house, or in the yard, or the stable, or the field, as the occasion may require. Into this one of the magicians des-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

On the north side, a little below the temple, there is a small tank with perennial water, which is considered holy, but 100 years ago it is said to have been defiled by a Chándála woman bathing in it, when the spring ceased to flow for some time.

On the south-east ridge a cave is shown which, according to Brahminical discovery, offered an asylum to the exiled Pándus! After their departure the cave was occupied by a tiger, which with due respect for the játre quits his abode 7 days before the feast and afterwards returns.

On the precipitous side of the rock there are nests of vultures and several hundreds of beehives.

For seven days before the Tulásankramana in the village Mugutagéri at the foot of the hill, the ryots assemble one from each house at the Mandu and sing Coorg chants in praise of Isvara. On the night of the 7th the inhabitants of the whole nád come together, disguising themselves in masks of 18 various descriptions, they then go to the Ambala and dance and sing to the sound of the tomtom. The day following a light hollow frame, representing a horse, made of cane-work, is decked out so as to hide the lower part of the man's body who carries it, making it appear as if he rode the horse. The multitude then ascend the hill in procession, headed by the horse and a band of musicians, dance round the temple and bring their offerings of water, fruit and money.

The *Pálúr játre* in Kuyingherinád in honor of Pálúrappa, brother of Iggudappa, is a similar affair, which takes place in the month of April. The temple was rebuilt only a few years ago at a considerable expense and chiefly by the exertions of a Coorg official whose zeal and devotion one could wish had been employed in a better cause, especially in the education of his ignorant and superstitious nád people!

Amongst the játres beyond this country those visited by the Coorgs are four: *Subramanya* on the northern frontier of Coorg, which, in December, attracts a great number of people,

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you will find near the fountain of the Kávéri, a friend of my father Kavéraráya, who has for three lives worshipped me" ('three lives' does not here mean, father, son and grandson, but three actual lives of the same person, who worshipped Párvati until his death, and, when he was born again according to Hindu theory, spent his second life, and after that his third life, in the service of the goddess.) The Coorgs went and found him at the sources of the Kávéri. He taught them during a whole month, which they spent there, how to prepare food for their ancestors, and other holy rites. Since that day all the Coorgs assemble each year in the month of Tulá (October—November) to celebrate the great festival of their tribe in honour of Kávéri.

2. POPULAR TRADITION.

Disappointed by the extravagant brahminical legends regarding the origin and early history of the Coorgs, we naturally expect, that the Coorg bards, who in their Pálamés so graphically and with truthful simplicity depict the domestic and social events of Coorg life, would with equal artlessness have preserved the early pages of their country's history; but Coorg shares in the general fate of primitive Indian history—the dark ages are left with hardly a ray of reassuring light. Coorg tradition has been supplanted by Brahminism and what information one is able to obtain is in most cases but a faint echo of the legends of the Kávéri Purána or some other brahminical imposition. There is, however, one story free from this imputation, and it is of considerable value as it throws light on the origin of some of the Coorg deities, who are not the creations of brahminical fancy, though their shrines are now presided over by Brahmins. The story is taken from oral tradition, and runs thus:—In ancient times there lived in the Malabar country six brothers and a sister.

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with the arrow and stay where it fell. The arrow struck into a mango tree at Ponnangála in the village of Yawakkapádi. Ponnangálatamma, assuming the shape of a crane, flew towards Ponnangála. Near the Karatandra house some Holeyas were working in the paddy fields. Ponnangálatamma flew upon one of them, who became possessed with a devil, and ran towards the tree, in which the arrow was sticking. The brothers afterwards separated into different villages, where they settled. The whole family were afterwards worshipped as gods. Beytárappa has a temple at Beytur in Malabar, the second in Taliparambu in Malabar, the third in the Maletambira forest in the Chómamale in Coorg, the fourth on the Iguttappa-hill near Kunjila, the fifth at Páldr in Kuyangérinád, the sixth, Tirnalli-Timmeya at Tirnally in the Wynád. A temple was also built for Ponnangálatamma round the tree, where the arrow had stuck. At her annual feast, in April, Ponnangálatamma weeps, and is worshipped by the Holeyas. The arrow is, up to the present day, seen sticking in the wild mango tree.

Regarding the ancient government of Coorg the popular tradition states, that the country was divided into 12 Kómbus (districts) and 35 Náds (subdivisions) ruled over by petty chiefs, called Náyakas who lived in constant feuds amongst themselves and gradually succumbed to the wily encroachments of the Háleri-Polygars about whom more anon.

3. CONJECTURES REGARDING THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE COORGS.

In the absence of any reliable records prior to the Mussulman historian Ferishta who at the end of the 16th century casually mentions, that Coorg was governed by its own princes, our conjectures regarding its history anterior to this period are but guesses at the truth, based upon collateral circum-

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India

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has been sacrificed. Similarly in Bellur in Tavaligeri-Murnad of Kiggatnad taluq, once a year, by turns from each house, a man was sacrificed by cutting off his head at the temple; but when the turn came to a certain home, the devoted victim made his escape into the jungle. The villagers, after an unsuccessful search, returned to the temple, and said to the pūjārī 'Kalak Adu,' which has a double meaning, *viz.* Kalak, next year, Adu, we will give, or Adu, a goat, and thenceforth only scapegoats were offered. The devotees fast during the day. The he-goat is killed in the afternoon; the blood is sprinkled upon a stone, and the flesh eaten. At night the Panikas, dressed in red and white striped cotton cloths, and their faces covered with metal or bark masks, perform their demoniacal dances. In Mercara taluq in Ippanivolavade, and in Kadikeri in Halerinad, the villagers sacrifice a Kona or male buffalo instead of a man. Tied to a tree in a gloomy grove near the temple, the beast is killed by a Mēda (a wandering tribe, who are basket and mat makers), who cuts off its head with a large knife, but no Coorgs are present at the time. The blood is spilled on a stone under a tree, and the flesh eaten by the Mēdas. In connexion with this sacrifice there are peculiar dances performed by the Coorgs around the temple, the *kombata* or horn dance, each man wearing the horns of a spotted deer or stag on his head; the *pili-ata* or peacock's feather dance, the performers being ornamented with peacock's feathers, and the *chauri-ata* or yak-tail dance, during which the dancers, keeping time, swing yak-tails. These ornaments belong to the temple, where they are kept.

"In some cases where a particular curse, which can only be removed by an extraordinary sacrifice, is said by the Kaniya[1] to rest upon a house, stable, or field, the ceremony performed seems to be another relic of human sacrifices. The Kaniya sends for some

[1] The Kaniyas are religious mendicants, said to be descendants of a Malayali Brāhman and a low-caste woman.